This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

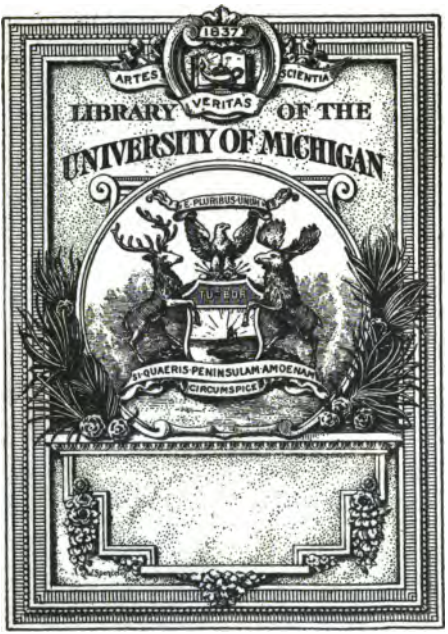
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

828
C50
T6

A 996,201

URE SE
EATWRITERS

GIL
BY
WELL



Digitized by Google

828
C5-O
T6

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

BOOKS ON CHAUCER

CHAUCER'S POETICAL WORKS. With Poems formerly printed with his or attributed to him. Edited, with a Memoir, Introduction, Notes, and a Glossary, by Robert Bell. Revised and improved edition, with a Preliminary Essay by Rev. Prof. Skeat, M.A. *With Portrait of Chaucer.* 4 vo'.s. 3*s.* 6*d.* each.
Bohn's Standard Library.

CHAUCER'S POETICAL WORKS. Edited with Memoir and Introductions by Dr. R. Morris. *With Portrait.* 6 vols. 2*s.* 6*d.* net each. *Aldine Poets.*

THE AGE OF CHAUCER (1346-1400). By F. J. Snell, M.A. With an Introduction by Professor Hales. Crown 8vo, 3*s.* 6*d.* *Handbooks of English Literature.*

"An effective, critical, and descriptive sketch that cannot but allure the intelligent reader to make a more extensive acquaintance with the works of our earliest great literary artist."—*Literary World.*

SELECTIONS FROM CHAUCER. Edited by J. B. Bilderbeck, M.A., Professor of English Literature, Presidency College, Madras. *Second edition.* 2*s.* 6*d.*; sewed, 1*s.* 9*d.*

CONTENTS: Seys and Alcyone—Parlement of Foules—Anelida and Arcite—Fortune—Former Age—Truth—Gentilesse—Lack of Stedfastness—Complaynt to his Purse.

EARLY ENGLISH LITERATURE. By Bernard ten Brink. Vol. II. (Wyclif, Chaucer, Earliest Drama, Renaissance.) Translated by W. Clarke Robinson, Ph.D., formerly Lecturer in Durham University, &c. 3*s.* 6*d.* *Bohn's Standard Library.*

LONDON: GEORGE BELL AND SONS,
YORK HOUSE, PORTUGAL STREET, W.C.

Digitized by Google

CHAUCER

Digitized by Google

Miniature Series of Great Writers

Edited by G. C. WILLIAMSON, Litt.D.

Pott 8vo, Illustrated, to be had in cloth or limp leather.

COLERIDGE. By RICHARD GARNETT, C.B., LL.D.

SHAKESPEARE. By ALFRED EWEN.

CHAUCER. By Rev. W. TUCKWELL, M.A.

DE QUINCEY. By HENRY S. SALT.
[*In the Press.*

In Preparation.

JOHNSON. By JOHN DENNIS.

BROWNING. By SIR F. T. MARZIALS, C.B.

MILTON. By G. C. WILLIAMSON, Litt.D.

SIR WALTER SCOTT. By J. H. W. LAING, M.D.

GOLDSMITH. By ERNEST LAING BUCKLAND, M.A.

MACAULAY. By RICHARD GARNETT, C.B., LL.D.

LONDON: GEORGE BELL & SONS.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Walker & Cockerell photo.] [*National Portrait Gallery.*

CHAUCER.

From the Sloane Portrait.

Digitized by Google

Bell's Miniature Series of Great Writers

CHAUCER

BY

REV. W. TUCKWELL, M.A.

LONDON
GEORGE BELL & SONS
1904

Digitized by Google

And for ther is so greet diversitee
In English and in wryting of our tonge,
So preye I god that noon miswrytē thee,
Ne thee mis-metre for defaute of tonge.
And red wher-so thou be, or ellēs songe,
That thou be understonde I god beseche.

CHISWICK PRESS: CHARLES WHITTINGHAM AND CO.
TOOKS COURT, CHANCERY LANE, LONDON.

Digitized by Google

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	LIFE OF CHAUCER	9
II.	CHAUCER'S EARLIER WORKS . . .	19
	Works of Period I, before 1373 . .	19
	Works of Period II, 1373 to 1384 .	26
	Works of Period III, from 1385 .	37
III.	THE CANTERBURY TALES	43
IV.	GUIDE TO THE READING OF CHAUCER	78
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	91
	INDEX	93

131456

Digitized by Google

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PAGE

PORTRAIT OF CHAUCER. From the Sloane Portrait. *National Portrait Gallery* *Frontispiece*

CHAUCER'S TOMB IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY 16

PORTRAIT OF CHAUCER. From the miniature in Occleve's MS. in the British Museum 32

THE SCENE OF THE MARTYRDOM, CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL 44

THE TABARD INN. From an old water-colour 48

THE CANTERBURY PILGRIMS. After Stothard. *National Gallery* 52

CHAUCER ON PILGRIMAGE. From the Ellesmere MSS. *Bridgewater House* . . 58

THE CANTERBURY PILGRIMS. After Blake. *National Gallery* 68

Digitized by Google

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

CHAPTER I

LIFE OF CHAUCER

THE second quarter of the fourteenth century was an epoch of notable men and a seed-time of great events. In Italy, Dante had not long been dead, Petrarch and Boccaccio were still singing, Giotto was painting still; while at Rome the brief ascendency of Rienzi seemed for a moment to have revived the patriotic loftiness of its old Republic. In France, Froissart was training himself to chronicle the splendid pageants of a Chivalry whose knell, though he knew it not, had already been sounded on the fields of Courtrai, Morgarten, and Creçy. The League of the Cantons was vindicating Swiss freedom by its repulse of the Austrian power, in the Flemish cities democratic supremacy had been established by the elder Artaveldt. In England, so long as good Queen Philippa lived, the rule of Edward III was well administered, his Court virtuous, the country prosperous and peaceful; while the growth of Trade-gilds in the town, and the rise of Free

Digitized by Google

Labourers in the villages, not checked as yet by the ravages of the Black Death, proclaimed the golden age of English artisan and peasant.

Meanwhile there were living in the City of London a certain John Chaucer and Agnes his wife. The name is old French *Chaucier*, a hosier or shoemaker; but the family seems to have come originally from East Anglia. Of this John Chaucer not much is known; he was born 1312, married about 1329, died about 1366: his widow, a woman of substance, soon married again. He was by trade a vintner or wine merchant: his house and shop were in Upper Thames Street, just on the spot, we are told, where that still existing street is crossed by the South-Eastern Railway in its southward course from Cannon Street Station: and here, about 1340, was born his famous son, GEOFFREY CHAUCER. Of the boy's early years nothing has come down to us. We may, if we please, fancy him playing on the banks of Thames, at that time in many parts, up to the "bricky towers" of the Temple, a meadow-bordered and unpolluted stream,

> Whose rutty banks, the which his river hems,
> Was painted all with variable flowers,
> And all the meads adorned with dainty gems,
> Fit to deck maidens' bowers.

Nor do we know by what teachers was laid in those early years the foundation of his later marvellous erudition: from his laughing betrayal of trade secrets in the "Pardoneres Tale," the adulteration, that is, by the vintners of light Gascon

Digitized by Google

with strong Spanish wines, and from his knowledge of

> The whytë wyn of Lepe,
> That is to selle in Fish-strete or in Chepe,

and his warning against its consequences, we gather that he must have served sometimes in the paternal shop or cellar, and noted the Sot's Progress with outspoken yet humorous disgust.

But the elder Chaucer had also some connection with the Court, for we find him in attendance on the King and Queen when visiting Flanders in 1338; and this perhaps enabled him subsequently to place his young son as page in the household of a royal prince. The King's third son, Lionel, had married Elizabeth, heiress to the two great families of de Clare and de Burgh; and had been created in his wife's right Duke of Clarence, a title which on four subsequent occasions has decorated members of our royal family. A fragment of this great dame's household account book, luckily preserved on two parchment leaves, notes an outlay of seven shillings, about £5 of our money, on a paltock or doublet, red and black breeches, and a pair of shoes, for Geoffrey Chaucer, together with a donation of *2s. 6d.* for necessaries. The sheet bears the date of 1357, when the page would have been about seventeen years old. Two years later he was present as a soldier in the English army which invaded France, and was taken prisoner; but liberated at the Peace of Bretigny, 1360, the King paying £16 towards his ransom.

Digitized by Google

During the next six years we lose sight of him; but he probably continued in the royal service, for in 1367 the King grants him a life pension of twenty marks (£13 6*s.* 8*d.*) "for present and former service," under the title of *valettus noster*, our valet, or perhaps yeoman of the palace. In 1368, the Duke of Clarence died; but Chaucer found a patron and lasting friend in the prince's next brother, John of Gaunt; the death of whose wife, Blanche of Lancaster, in 1369, he celebrated in his poem called the "Book of the Duchesse":

> And godë fairë WHYTE she hete [was named],
> That was my lady namë right;
> She was bothë fair and bright,
> She haddë not her namë wrong.

Between the years 1370 and 1380 he was employed on various diplomatic missions; to Italy, to Flanders, to France; and we note his bearing now the higher rank of *scutifer*, Esquire. His French embassy brought him into touch with Froissart, who records him as present with other Englishmen at Calais, to discuss with French ambassadors the terms of a treaty of peace. His visit to Italy, which lasted nearly twelve months, had a marked effect upon his genius, and is reflected in his subsequent poems. It is probable that during this stay he visited Petrarch at Padua, and heard from his lips the Latin translation of Boccaccio's "Patient Griselda," which becomes in his great poem the "Clerkes Tale":

> I wol you telle a talë which that I
> Lernëd at Padowe of a worthy clerk,
> Fraunceys Petrark, the laureat poete.

Digitized by Google

He must have acquitted himself in these embassies to his master's satisfaction; for besides handsome money payments, he received successively a daily pitcher of wine—predictive possibly of "the butt of sherry to make him merry" which formed a perquisite of later Laureates—a Controllership of Customs, a valuable Wardship, and a fine of £71 which had been escheated from some delinquent to the Crown. From John of Gaunt had also come in 1374 a life pension of £10, for good services rendered to the duke by Geoffrey Chaucer "and his wife Philippa." The date of this marriage seems uncertain. We know that he had been at one time passionately in love with a lady who rejected him. The story is told in his earliest original poem, the "Compleynt unto Pite," 1367, and is reflected in the pathetic pictures of forlorn amorous wretchedness which animate his "Troilus and Criseyde." He abandoned his suit as hopeless; "But that is doon," he says in his lines on Duchess Blanche; and eventually consoled himself. It is conjectured that his wife may have been Philippa Roet, sister to Katharine Swynford, the mistress and afterwards the wife of John of Gaunt. This, if true, explains the constant favour shown to him by the Lancastrian family.

In 1377 Edward III died; but Chaucer was retained in the favour and employ of his successor, Richard II. He was sent again on an Italian mission to the Duke of Milan, whom he mentions in his "Monkes Tale" as

Of Melan greatë Barnabe Viscounte,

Digitized by Google

and received on his return yet further appointments, which he was permitted to discharge by deputy; gaining thereby, as is supposed, leisure for the compilation of his "Canterbury Tales." This valuable boon is believed to have been due to the intercession on his behalf of Richard's first wife, good Queen Anne. In his Prologue to the "Legend of Good Women" the God of Love bids him dedicate to her his poem:

> And when this book is maad, give hit the Quene
> On my behalfe, at Eltham or at Shene.

In 1386 he was elected a Knight of the Shire for Kent, and appears to have been living at a house in Greenwich, in whose garden was the

> Litel erber that I have,
> Y-beached newe with turvës fresh y-grave,

described in the same Prologue.

But evil days were at hand. During the temporary ascendency of Humphry, Duke of Gloucester, Chaucer was dismissed from his offices and reduced to comparative poverty, and in 1387 he lost his wife. Two years later Gloucester's brief domination ceased, and the poet, with returning favour, was appointed Clerk of the Works at Windsor, where St. George's Chapel was rising. Soon afterwards we find him employed to put up scaffolding for a tournament in Smithfield, and further endowed with a money grant, a forestership, and a yearly tun of wine. Even so he seems not to have recovered from his former impoverishment, for in 1398 he is sued for a

Digitized by Google

debt, and on the accession of Henry IV in the following year he addresses to his old patron's son a short poem called a "Compleynt to his Empty Purs," bewailing his poverty: "I am shave as nye as any frere." The petition brought immediate relief; he was enabled to lease a house in Westminster; and there, in the year 1400, he died. He was buried in the Abbey, earliest of the great brotherhood who have given a name to Poet's Corner. Near him lie Francis Beaumont, Sir John Denham, John Dryden, Matthew Prior. No monument appears to have been erected to him at the time,

> Memory o'er his tomb no trophies raised.

Caxton, his devout admirer and first printer of his works, set up a pillar near the spot, on which was graven an epitaph of thirty-four Latin lines. This has disappeared, as have some verses on a ledge of brass supposed to have been attached to the tomb. In 1556 another pious devotee, one Nicholas Brigham, constructed a monument of gray marble, still to be seen, on which, along with Chaucer's coat of arms and portrait, was the following inscription, now obliterated:

M. S.
Qui fuit Anglorum vates ter maximus olim,
Galfridus Chaucer, conditur hoc tumulo.
Annum si quæras domini, si tempora vitæ,
Ecce notæ subsunt, quæ tibi cuncta notant.

25 Octobris 1400
Ærumnarum Requies Mors.

N. Brigham hos fecit Musarum nomine sumptus.
1556

Digitized by Google

One son, Lewis, we know he had, "litel Lowis my sone," for whom in 1391 he composed a prose treatise on the Astrolabe, to be noticed later on. This boy probably died young. He is credited by some with the paternity of a certain Thomas Chaucer, who afterwards attained considerable note and wealth; but this is looked upon as unproven. His portrait by Occleve (reproduced in this volume) is very probably authentic. It agrees fairly with his supposed self-portraiture in the Host's introduction to the "Tale of Sir Thopas"; the face small, fair, smooth, but sly and elvish; eyes meditative and downcast, broad forehead, sensuous mouth, corpulent body. Some have thought, however, that he describes himself more faithfully as the Squire, in the Prologue to the "Canterbury Tales." The Clerke, they observe, is lean, and has only "twenty bokës," while in the Prologue to the "Legend of Good Women" we learn that Chaucer's library held "sixty bokës olde and newe." The Squire was twenty years of age, about Chaucer's time of life when he went to fight in France: he must have passed through "Flaundres, Artoys, Picardye," where he tells us that the Squire had served; the Squire's "hope to stonden in his lady grace" tallies with Chaucer's love affair; his readiness to "sing and floyt" (flute), to "songës make and wel endyte," accords with Chaucer's early talent for poetical composition; while "wonderly deliver and greete of strengthe" suits a lively vigorous young man, not as yet grown quiet, thoughtful, and "a popet

Digitized by Google

Bolas photo.]

CHAUCER'S TOMB IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

in the waast." That both may be portraits of the outward man, say at twenty and at forty-seven years old, adds to the charm of both. Of his inward habit and temperament at about forty-three he tells us in the "Hous of Fame":

> Thou goost hoom to thy hous anoon
> And also, domb as any stoon,
> Thou sittest at another boke
> Till fully daswed is thy loke,
> And livest thus as an hermyte,
> Although thyn abstinence is lyte [little].

That last line saves the situation. He is absorbed in books, but not sullenly recluse; studious and ruminant in his chamber, yet festive and sociable in company; "one of those happy temperaments that could equally enjoy both halves of culture, the world of books and the world of men."

In dealing with the stages of his recorded life, it has been the task of his accomplished chroniclers, from Tyrwhitt to Skeat, to disentangle veracious history from legend. That he was born in Oxfordshire, and studied at both Universities; that he was in his youth fined two shillings for beating a Franciscan friar in Fleet Street; held service in the household of Margaret, Countess of Pembroke; was a follower and disciple of Alan Chartier; that his domestic life was unhappy; that in his disgrace under Duke Humphry's displeasure he saved himself by betraying certain of his friends; that he became proprietor of Donnington Castle, near Newbury; wrote his "Canterbury Tales" at Woodstock; died in his seventy-second year;—

Digitized by Google

are myths of the kind which spring up around and entwine all Memoirs since Biography began, and which historical criticism sets itself to expose and disallow. It may well be looked upon as fortunate that after a lapse of five centuries, and from an age unsystematic in recording facts no less than undiscerning in acceptance of testimony, students should have been now enabled to extricate, and to establish on the sure ground of history, so much of sequent and trustworthy in the life of our earliest and well-nigh our greatest poet,

> Dan Chaucer, the first warbler, whose sweet breath
> Preluded those melodious bursts, that fill
> The spacious times of great Elizabeth
> With sounds that echo still.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II

CHAUCER'S EARLIER WORKS

THE accepted Works of Chaucer are divided into three periods:

I. Before 1373: the poems either direct translations from the French, or imitated from French models, Eustache Deschamps, Guillaume de Machault, and others.

II. From 1373 to 1384. These, following on his visit to Italy, show the influence on his genius of Italian poetry.

III. From 1385 to 1399. These are marked by greater originality and power than their predecessors. They include the "Legend of Good Women" and the "Canterbury Tales."

WORKS OF PERIOD I, BEFORE 1373

The first poem of this period is the ROMAUNT OF THE ROSE, translated from the "Roman de la Rose," a piece highly esteemed by the French as their most valuable relic of ancient poetry. It was begun by Guillaume de Lorris, who died in 1260, and completed by Jean de Meun, who lived into the succeeding century. A magnificent

Digitized by Google

copy of the poem, exquisitely illustrated, is among the Harleian MSS. in the British Museum; transcribed about the year 1480, says Dibdin, who has reproduced several of the illuminations. It is a love romance, the lady of the lover's quest being portrayed under the allegory of a Rose. Lorris treats it purely as a love poem, de Meun makes it a vehicle for powerful satires on the Church and on society. Only the first part of the translation is now ascribed to Chaucer: the work of de Meun, divided into two portions by a considerable gap, is rendered probably by two different hands. Professor Skeat ingeniously conjectures that one of these portions may be by King James I of Scotland, whose "King's Quhair" shows him to have been acquainted with Chaucer's version. As to the other translator no guess, I believe, has been hazarded.

The story is briefly as follows. The poet dreams that it is May morning,—it is always May with Chaucer;—the flowers are gleaming in the grass, the "smallë briddës" warbling in the trees; he arises joyously to go forth. He finds a garden, on whose outer walls are painted evil Qualities, as Hate, Vilanye, Pope-holy or Hypocrisy: he describes them with a force of allegory as new to English as to French literature. Admitted into the garden by Ydelnesse, he meets with Mirth, accompanied by Lady Gladnesse and Cupid, and pursues his way to a "Roser," in which an extraordinarily beautiful Knoppe, or half-opened Rose, becomes the object of his desires. As he gazes upon it, Cupid accosts him, and instructs him

Digitized by Google

in the arts of prosperous wooing; namely, to be virtuous in life, pure of speech, deferential, well-dressed, cleanly in person, accomplished in song and poetry, a dexterous horseman, open-handed; yet goes on to warn him of the pangs which must needs be the portion of a lover. There comes to him a kindly guide, named Bialacoil, or Fair Reception, and admits him within the rosary, where he reverently kisses the Rose. But Daunger, its guardian, drives him out, and, at the instigation of Jelousy, shuts up Bialacoil in prison. Here de Lorris breaks off, and de Meun pursues the tale, submitting the lover to the counsels of Reason, which he rejects. A long gap in the translation follows, and on its resumption we have little more than a spirited description of one Fals-semblaunt, leaving us uncertain both as to the fate of poor Bialacoil and the final issue of the lover's quest. That he did gather the Rose at last we know from the original.

The whole poem, following the French, is written in the octosyllabic metre with four accents, familiar to English readers in "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" of Milton. I transcribe one or two short passages, both in French and English, from the part accepted as Chaucer's handiwork:

Qu'on joli moys de May son-
geoye,
Ou temps amoureux plein de
joye,
Que toute chose si s'esgaye,
Si qu'il n'y a buissons ne haye
Qui en May parer ne se vueille,
Et couvrir de nouvelle fueille:
Les boys recouvrent leur ver-
dure,

That it was May, thus dremed
me,
In tyme of love and jolitee,

That al thing ginneth waxen gay,
For ther is neither busk nor hay
In May, that it nil shrouded been
And it with newē levēs wreen.
These wodēs eek recoveren
grene,

Digitized by Google

Qui sont secs tant qui l'hiver dure;
La terre mesmes s'en orgouille
Pour la rougée qui la mouille,
En oublian la povretè
Où elle a tout l'hiver estè.

That drye in winter been to sene,
And the erthē wexeth proud withalle
For swotē dewes that on it falle
And al the pore estat forget
In which that winter had it set.

Here are some of the flowers in the garden:

Violette y fut moult belle
Et aussi parvenche nouvelle;
Fleurs y eut blanches et vermeilles,
On ne pourroit trouver pareilles,
De toutes diverses couleurs,
De haulx prix et de grans valeurs,
Si estoit soef flairans
Et reflagrans et odorans.

Ther sprang the violete al newe,
And fresshe pervinkē, riche of hewe,
And flowrēs yelowe, whyte, and rede;
Swich plentee grew ther never in mede.
Ful gay was al the ground, and queynt,
And poudred, as men had it peynt,
With many a fresshe and sondry flour
That casten up ful good savour.

Notice the word *pervinkē*, periwinkle, from the Latin *pervincire*, to bind about the head as a coronet or garland.

One more charming bit I must extract, the portrait of Beautee.

Tendre eut la chair comme rousée,
Simple fut comme une espousée,
Et blanch comme fleur de lis,
Visage eut bel doulx et alis,
Elle estoit gresle et alignée
L'estoit fardie ne pignée
Car elle n'avoit pas mestier
De soy farder et affaictier.
Les cheveulx ent blons et si long
Qu'ils batoient aux talons.

Her flesh was tendre as dewe of flour,
Her chere was simple as byrde [bride] in bour,
As whyt as lilie or rose in rys [on spray]
Hir facē, gentil and trelys.
Fetys she was, and smalt to see;
No windrēd [trimmed] browēs haddē she,
Ne popped [tricked out] hir, for it neded nought
To windre hir, or to peynte hir ought.
Hir tresses yelowe and longē straughten
Unto hir helēs doun they raughten.

Digitized by Google

The remaining fragments, both in French and English, are well worth reading. Such satire we shall not meet with again until Skelton, nor such allegory until the "Induction" of Sackville; but the translation is not Chaucer's, and we pass it by.

It will be well to mention next the short MINOR POEMS, which, though assigned to very different dates, we find printed together in the best modern editions. They are as follows.

The Roman numerals appended show the periods to which they probably belong.

The A. B. C.	I.
The Compleynt of Mars.	II.
A Compleynt to his Lady.	I.
Wordes unto Adam.	II.
The Former Age.	II.
Fortune.	II.
Merciless Beautee.	II.
To Rosemounde.	Uncertain.
Truth.	I.
Gentilesse.	Uncertain.
Lak of Stedfastnesse.	Uncertain.
Lenvoy à Scogan.	III.
Lenvoy à Buxton.	III.
The Compleynt of Venus.	III.
The Compleynt to his Purs.	III.
Proverbs.	Uncertain.
Against Women Unconstant.	Uncertain.
An Amorous Compleynt.	I.
Balade of Compleynt.	Uncertain.

A few of these we may notice. The "A. B. C." is an acrostic prayer to the Virgin Mary trans-

Digitized by Google

lated in the eight-line stanza from Guillaume de Deguilleville, a Cistercian monk. The "Compleynt unto Pite," the lament of one crossed in love to Pity, who being dead cannot hear him, is in Chaucer's favourite seven-line stanza, now for the first time found in English. The "Compleynt of Mars," when driven from the arms of Venus, contains a noticeable simile from the gentle art of angling, acquired, one likes to think, on the banks of silver Thames, in the poet's boyhood; and is curiously filled with astronomical allusions. The "Wordes unto Adam" is a remonstrance with his scrivener or amanuensis for carelessness in copying his manuscripts:

> So ofte a daye I mot thy werk renewe
> Hit to correcte and eek to rubbe and scrape,
> And al is through thy negligence and rape [haste].

The "Scogan" to whom a short poem is addressed was one Henry Scogan, tutor to the sons of Henry IV, and author of a ballad in which Chaucer is affectionately mentioned. We are entreated to observe that he was *not* the Scogan whose head Sir John Falstaff broke ("2 Henry IV," iii. 2, 23); that he *was* the Skogan of whom in his "Masque of the Fortunate Isles" Ben Jonson says that he was "a fine gentleman and a Master of Arts, of Henry the Fourth's time, that made disguises for the King's sons, and writ in Ballad royal daintily well."

Of the rest no mention need here be made. We pass on to the BOOK OF THE DUCHESSE; an epitaphium, as he tells us in the "Legend of Good Women," on the Duchess Blanche Plan-

Digitized by Google

tagenet of Lancaster, wife to John of Gaunt, who died in the pestilence of 1369. Crossed in love, the poet cannot sleep: he takes a book, and reads the tale of "Seys and Alcyoun," imitated here from his favourite Ovid. At last he drops off into a dream. It is a May morning: wakened, like Milton's joyous student, by singing birds and by the hunter's horn without, he rises to join the chase. Under a tree he finds a young gentleman "clothed al in blake," weeping bitterly for his lady dead. The poet tries to comfort the widower, who sadly tells the tale of his wooing, of the lady's refusal, her later relenting, his supreme wedded happiness, his inconsolable bereavement. Fortune, he says, challenged him to play at chess,

> Atte ches with me she gan to pleye:
> With her falsë draughtes divers
> She stal on me, and took my fers [queen];
> And when I saw my fers aweye,
> Alas! I couthe no lenger pleye,
> But seydë—farwel, swete, y-wis,
> And farwel al that ever ther is!
> Therwith Fortune seyde "Chek here!"
> And "Mate!" in mid pointe of the chekkere [board]
> With a poune [pawn] erraunt, alas!
> Ful craftier to pleye she was
> Than Athalus, that made the game
> First of the ches: so was his name.

There is much grace and deep feeling in the poem, and it exhibits the high pure estimate of "ladyhed" which his verse almost habitually maintains; but the lines are sometimes feeble and prosaic, the illustrations from Scripture and

Digitized by Google

mythology tediously redundant: the poet's wings were not yet fully grown. I am sorry to add that the inconsolable widower married again in the following year.

Referable to about the same date is the poem called ANELIDA AND ARCITE, taken, in part only he tells us, from the Latin poet Statius. The Arcite of this poem must not be confounded with Arcite of the "Knightes Tale." It is brief and unfinished, the pathetic and moving record of a lady deserted by her husband. The masculine vice of inconstancy is quaintly put:

> Hit is kinde of [natural to] man
> Sith Lamek was, that is so longe agoon,
> To bee in love as fals as ever he can.
> He was the firstë fader that began
> To loven two, and was in bigamye,
> And he found tentës first, but if men lye.

WORKS OF PERIOD II, 1373 TO 1384

The second period shows the influence upon Chaucer of Italian literature, as perceptible in the improved flow and more sustained sweetness of the verse. The PARLEMENT OF FOULES is in his seven-line stanza; its opening fancy borrowed from Cicero's "Dream of Scipio," his description of Venus' Temple from "Teseide" of Boccaccio; the last part, as he tells us, from "Aleyn," Alanus de Insulis, or Alein Delille. The birds meet on Valentine Day to choose their mates; Dame Nature presides. She arranges them in four ranks:

> That is to sey, the foulës of ravyne
> Were higest set; and then the foulës smalle

Digitized by Google

That eten as hem Nature wolde enclyne,
As worms, or thing of which I telle no tale:
But water foul sat lowest in the dale,
And foul that liveth by seed sat on the grene,
And that so fele [numerous] that wonder was to sene.

In his enumeration of the birds, each with significant epithet; in the humorous parlance of "goos, cokkow, and doke," we have Chaucer under a new aspect, emancipated at once from French influence, and from the bondage of translation. Let me quote his list of forest trees:

The bilder ook, and eek the hardy asshe,
The piler elm, the cofre unto careyne [coffin for a corpse];
The box tree piper, holm to whippës lasshe,
The sayling fir, the cipres deth to pleyne,
The olyve of pees, and eek the drunken vyne,
The victor palm, the laurer to devyne:

and compare with it Spenser's catalogue in the opening of the "Faery Queene":

The laurell, meed of mightie conquerours,
And poets sage, the firre that weepeth still,
The willow, worne of forlorn paramours,
The eugh, obedient to the bender's will,
The birch for shaftes, the sallow for the mill,
The mirrhe sweet bleeding in the bitter wound,
The warlike beech, the ash for nothing ill,
The fruitfull olive, and the platane round,
The carver holme, the maple seeldom inward sound.

Not so very much, as we shall observe later, had our English changed in the two centuries.

In BOETHIUS, claimed as his own work by Chaucer in the "Legend of Good Women,"—"He hath in prose translated Boece,"—we have his first prose composition. Boethius, known as

Digitized by Google

the last of the classic writers, was Senator and Consul under the reign of Theodoric, about A.D. 500. Imprisoned and afterwards cruelly murdered by his jealous master, who expressed on his own deathbed deep repentance for the crime, he composed while expecting death his great work, "The Consolations of Philosophy," "speaking from his prison," says Hallam, "in the swan-like tones of dying eloquence." The treatise became, as it deserved to be, extraordinarily popular; reappeared in French, Italian, Spanish, German, was amongst the books edited for his countrymen by our King Alfred, was the one Latin piece which Chaucer cared to translate, and was versified a few years later by one John Walton, Canon of Oseney, with a high compliment to Chaucer's rendering:

> To Chaucer, that is floure of rethoryk
> In Englisshe tong, and excellent poete,
> This wot I wel, nothing may I do lyk
> Thogh so that I of makynge entyrmete.

Its influence on Chaucer's later compositions is evident to every attentive reader, and is pointed out by Professor Skeat in an elaborate and interesting note. Its substance may be shortly given. To the captive bewailing himself in his bonds comes Philosophy as a comforter. She reminds him of the blessings which still are his, and exhorts to the tranquillity of soul which no tyrant can invade, "forthy no-thing is wreched but whan thou wenest it,"—a sentiment to reappear some day in Montaigne and in "Hamlet." She bids him discern between the "fals welefulness" of riches,

Digitized by Google

birth, dignity, sensual pleasure, and the "true welefulness" which lies in resignation to the will of God. To the righteousness of God's will the sufferer demurs, pleading the prosperity of shrewes (bad men), the adversity which befalls the good; and so they glide into the irreconcilableness of Predestination and Free Will, which even Dante failed to make illuminating; and, like the earliest recorded disputants on that insoluble theme, find no end, in wandering mazes lost. Formidable in first appearance, the long treatise delightfully repays a careful reading. If the arguments are sometimes obsolete, the spirited prose sustains them. By its terse antithesis and quaint proverbial citations I am reminded frequently as I read of Lyly's "Euphues"; and I am sure that much of the matter might be intercalated without detection into the witty pious reasonings of Jeremy Taylor's "Holy Dying." It was a maxim with Macaulay that one should never praise an author without offering a specimen of his wares; I extract a random but not untypical specimen:

"For sum man hath grete richesses, but he is ashamed of his ungentel linage; and sum is renowned of noblesse of kinrede, but he is enclosed in so grete anguisshe of nede of thinges, that him were lever that he were unknowe. And sum man haboundeth both in richesse and noblesse, but yit he bewaileth his chaste lyf, for he hath no wyf. And sum man is well and selily y-married, but he hath no children, and norissheth his richesses to the eyres [heirs] of strange folke.

Digitized by Google

And sum man is gladed with children, but he wepeth ful sory for the trespas of his sone or of his doughter. And for this ther ne accordeth no wight lightly to the condicioun of his fortune; for alwey to every man ther is in somwhat that, unassayed, he ne wot nat; or elles he dredeth that he hath assayed."

In the supremely beautiful poem called TROILUS AND CRISEYDE Chaucer is in part indebted to the "Filostrato" of Boccaccio: in part only, his English containing five thousand lines more than the Italian poem.

That Chaucer should on two occasions call the original author "Lollius" was long an insoluble puzzle; but is by Professor Skeat daringly supposed to arise from the poet's almost incredible misconception of a well-known line in Horace, which led him to believe that Lollius was a historian of the Trojan war. The story is mediaeval, not borrowed at all from Homer, who just mentions Troilus and Pandarus, and knows nothing of the lady. Her name was probably taken by Boccaccio from a very different person, the "Chryseis" of "Iliad," i. 82. But Chaucer has changed the incidents and transposed the characters of Boccaccio, the Pandarus of the poem being his own creation.

Troilus, son to King Priam, a proved soldier and a gallant gentleman, falls passionately in love with Criseyde, a beautiful young Trojan widow, and entreats the good offices of her uncle Pandarus. He, by practising on his niece's curiosity, her pity, her hero-worship, induces her to

Digitized by Google

see and subsequently to listen to her lover, until in her own heart love springs up, and she avows it.

> And as the new abaysshed nightingale,
> That stinteth first whan she biginneth singe,
> Whan that she hereth any herde tale [talk],
> Or in the hegges any wight steringe [stirring],
> And after siker dooth her voys out-ringe,
> Right so Criseydë, whan hir dredë stente,
> Opned hir herte, and tolde him hir entente.

She gives herself to her lover, and the enamoured pair reap a brief harvest of rapturous mutual bliss.

> Noght nedeth it to yow, sin they ben met,
> To aske at me if that they blythë were;
> For if it erst was wel, tho [then] was it bet
> A thousandfold, this nedeth not enquere;
> A-gon was every sorwe and every fere,
> And bothe, y-wis, they hadde, and so they wende,
> As muchë joye as hertë may comprende.

But she is compelled to leave Troy and join her father the prophet Calchas, who is sojourning in the Grecian camp. With tears and oaths of fidelity the lovers part, she promising to return, at any rate for a season, in ten days' time. Even before the appointed tryst, and then for many following days, Troilus expects her from the palace roof, visiting daily with sadly tender recollection each spot where they had met; her house now closed and empty, the temple in which he had watched her at her prayers, the hall in which unobserved he had seen her dance, the city gate which witnessed their farewell.

Digitized by Google

Fro thennesforth he rydeth up and doun,
And everything com him to remembraunce,
As he rood forth by places of the toun,
In whiche he whylom hadde al his plesaunce.
"Lo, yond saugh I myn owenë lady daunce;
And in that temple, with hir eyen clere
Me caughtë first my rightë lady dere.

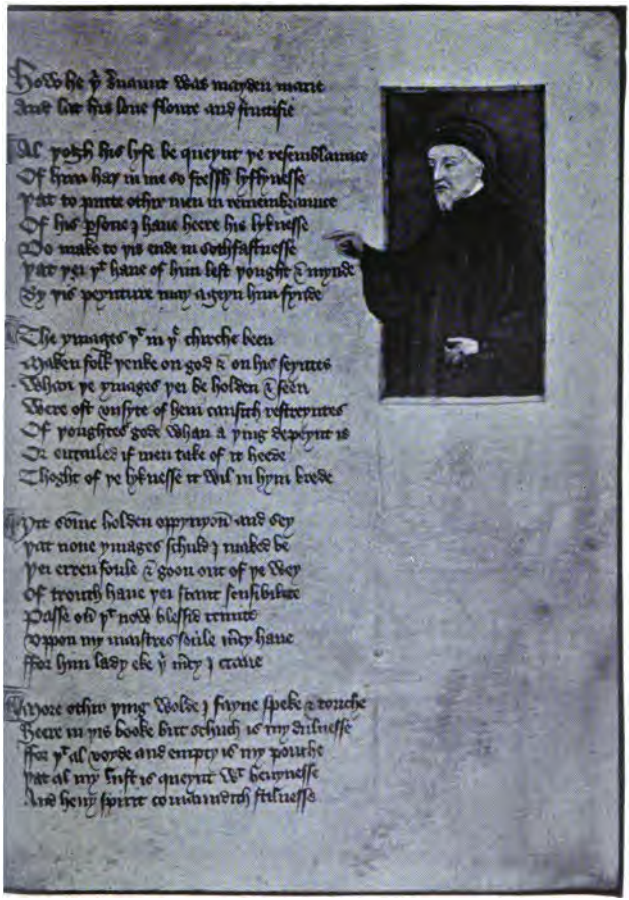
"And yonder have I herd ful lustily
My derë hertë laughe, and yonder pleye
Saugh I hir onës eek ful blisfully.
And yonder onës to me gan she seye
'Now goodë swetë, love me wel, I preye.'
And yon so goodly gan she me biholde
That to the deeth myn herte is to hir holde.

"And at that corner, in the yonder hous,
Herde I myn alderlevest lady dere
So wommanly, with voys melodious,
Singen so wel, so goodly, and so clere,
That in my soulë yet me thinketh I here
The blisful soun; and, in that yonder place
My lady first took me unto hir grace."

But days and weeks passed by, for she was faithless; had broken her vows to Troilus, and surrendered to an importunate Grecian suitor, Diomede. Troilus long struggles to disbelieve her treachery, until a piece of coat armour torn from Diomede in a skirmish is brought into Troy, and attached to it is a brooch which Troilus had given to his lady. Despairingly he seeks relief in the fury of the battlefield, and there after heroic deeds is slain.

To English readers the story is known from Shakespeare. His view of it, in one of the less powerful of his plays, is comic: he creates, says Gervinus, an irony of the Trojan war. His

Digitized by Google



[*Harleian Collection, British Museum.*

CHAUCER.

From the Miniature in Occleve's "De Regimine Principis."
(By permission of the Royal Society of Literature.)

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Troilus is foolish, blind, credulous; his Cressid a transparent wanton; Pandarus what his name has come to imply, an adroit, worthless, lying go-between. Chaucer, animated by pungent personal reminiscence, conceives the episode in passionate earnest: in Troilus is portrayed all that can illuminate constancy in love and heighten misery in betrayal: Pandarus, a sincere and devoted friend to both, yet views the enamoured youth's ardour with a humorous cynical penetration bordering on contempt, accepts the lady's treason as the badge of all her tribe. Even for false Criseyde Chaucer ventures some excuse, in the lonely helplessness which drove her to accept a powerful Greek protector. Her guilt, he admits, is too notorious, yet he will not cast a stone.

Dull elf must he be, to quote Sir Walter Scott's anathema, whose heart is not deep stricken, his literary sense not thrilled, by this beautiful romance. It brings out, for the first time, the strong dramatic element in Chaucer's genius; a fullness of characterization lightened by the delicate banter with which from time to time he "buttonholds" his readers, and claims the ownership of creation in the puppets which he has made to live and breathe and act before them. In felicitous elegance of phrase, in structural brightness, in laconic narrative, in perfected poetical form, he soars above predecessors and contemporaries, sparkles where Gower would be tedious, stands apart from Langland, as the refined adept in worldcraft differs from the un-

Digitized by Google

polished, harsh-spoken, caustic countryman. And yet observe how, like all the veritable Makers who have sublimed narrative into drama; like Shakespeare in "Lear," like Scott in "Lammermoor," he shows how, with all his genial appreciation of life's sunshine, he can sound at will its lowest depths of tragic possibilities, can weave the sorrow's crown of sorrow which Boethius and Dante discerned, and Tennyson was one day to commemorate:

> For of Fortunës sharp adversitee
> The worst kinde of infortunë is this,
> A man to have been in prosperitee,
> And it remember when it passed is.

The HOUS OF FAME, 1383, is a sweven or dream. Tired as a weary pilgrim, he tells us that he fell asleep, and fancied himself in a Temple of Glass, on whose walls was graven the story of Aeneas and Dido, which he paraphrases pretty closely from Virgil. Suddenly a huge eagle swooping down bears him up aloft as if he were a lark, telling him that Jove loves him for his poetry, and will reward him with a vision of the House of Fame. The Palace stood upon a steep rock of ice, on which were inscribed, though partly melted by the sun, all famous names in history. It was formed of beryl—a reminiscence of Ezekiel's vision—and within it sate Lady Fame upon a throne of carbuncle, while beside her were ranked the great writers of all time. The list is curious: there are Homer, Virgil, Ovid, Statius, Lucan, Claudian, Guido de Colonna, Dares, Dictys, Josephus, Geoffrey of

Digitized by Google

Monmouth, and the apocryphal Lollius. Crowds kneel before the goddess in prayer that their names may fly abroad: she sends for Aeolus, who brings a golden and a brazen trumpet, empowered like Milton's massy keys to open and to shut; for the golden confers heaven-awarded praise, the brazen infamous obloquy. Thence the poet is borne to the House of Rumour, constructed like a vast cage of twigs and ever turning round: into it pours the Chatter of all humanity in mingled truth and lies:—but here the tale breaks off unfinished. The poem was imitated by Lydgate, Gawain Douglas, Skelton; imitated, and it must be owned spoiled, by Pope, for he disguised in a medley of Egyptian, Grecian, Eastern architecture Chaucer's palace, whose babewinnes (baboons), pinnacles, and painted windows, kervinges, corbels, and imageries, reflected the Gothic edifices then at their highest splendour in every cathedral town of England; and stiffened the fantastic inconsequence of a dream into the polite and literal correctness of eighteenth-century convention. Chaucer falls back in this poem on the rimed four-accent octosyllable which he employed in the "Romaunt of the Rose" and the "Book of the Duchesse." Here too, in more than any of his poems, we trace the influence of the "Divina Commedia." Both are dreams, both dreamers are careful to fix the day on which they fell entranced; Dante on Good Friday, 1300, Chaucer on December 10th, 1383: in both we have the story of Phaethon: Chaucer's rock of ice recalls the steep

Digitized by Google

rock in Canto III of the "Purgatorio": the descent of his eagle is closely imitated from the same poem: his short invocation opening Book II, his long address to Apollo in Book III, are almost word for word from the Italian poet. Let us sample the verse with the descent and rise of the eagle:

This egle, of which I have yow told
That shoon with fethres as of gold,
Which that so hyë gan to sore,
I gan beholdë more and more,
To see hir beautee and the wonder.
But never was ther dint of thondre,
Ne that thing that men call foudre [*fulgur*, lightning]
That smoot somtyme a tour to poudre,
And in his swiftë coming brende [burned up]
That so swythë [quickly] gan descende,
As this foul, whan hit behelde
That I a-roume [roaming] was in the felde:
And with his grimmë pawës stronge
Within his sharpë naylës longe
Me, fleinge, at a swappe he hente,
And with his sours [soaring] agayn up wente,
Me caryinge in his clawës starke
As lightly as I were a larke,
How high, I cannot tellë yow.
For I cam up, I nistë how,
For so astonied and a-sweved [dazed]
Was every vertu in my heved,
What with his sours and with my drede,
That al my feling gan to dede,
For-why hit was to grete affray.

We shall notice what is perhaps the earliest mention of the newly invented cannon, used first, it is said, at Crecy in 1346:

As swift as pelet out of gonne,
Whan fyr is in the poudre ronne

Digitized by Google

though a few lines later he falls back on the more ordinary balista:

> And the noyse which that I herde
> For al the world right so it ferde [behaved]
> As doth the routing of the stoon,
> That from th' engyn is leten goon.

WORKS OF PERIOD III, FROM 1385

Poets for the most part attain their prime of power in early life, recovering in later years, momentarily or not at all, the careless rapture of their youth. Wordsworth's inspiration failed, though his fecundity increased, about ten years after publication of the "Lyrical Ballads"; Coleridge's wing drooped earlier still; Scott ceased to be "the English ballad-singer's joy" with "Rokeby," only eight years after his first great poem appeared; FitzGerald disparaged all Tennyson's poetry from the "Princess" onwards; but Chaucer kept the good wine until his readers had well drunk, producing his best work after the age of forty-three or four: and this third period of his creativeness opens with the LEGEND OF GOOD WOMEN. From its dedication to Anne of Bohemia, wedded to Richard II in 1382, it is in or subsequent to that year, and there are reasons for assigning it to 1385. It is in some sort a rehearsal of his greatest and latest poem, containing like that a Prologue and a series of Tales, and written like that, but now for the first time, in the metre, new to English poetry, known ever since as the "heroic couplet." Of the Prologue

Digitized by Google

there are two texts, instructive to Chaucerian scholars, perplexing to the general reader, who had better confine himself to one of them. Both open with his rhapsody on the Daisy, cited often by those to whom the rest of his pages are unfamiliar, none the less citable here. At daybreak in the month of May he goes out to watch his beloved flower open:

> And down on knees anon-right I me sette
> And, as I coude, this fresshë flour I grette,
> Kneling alwey til hit unclosed was,
> Upon the smalë softë swotë gras,
> That was with flourës swote embrouded al.

Night draws on, the flower closes up, he falls asleep and dreams. He sees the God of Love arrayed in royal robes and with face of dazzling beauty, who leads by the hand the Queen Alceste of Grecian tragedy, herself resembling a daisy in her costume of white and green and gold. A crowd of courtier ladies follow them; for the pair symbolize Richard and his Queen. They pause before the Daisy, which has transferred itself into the poet's dream.

> Now whether was that a wonder thing or noon,
> That, right anoon as that they gonne espye
> This flour, which that I clepe the dayësye,
> Full sodeinly they stinten alle at-ones,
> And kneled adoun, as it were for the nones.
> And after that they wenten in compas,
> Daunsinge about this flour an esy pas,
> And songen, as it were in carole-wyse,
> This balade, which that I shal yow devyse.

They sing a dainty ballad in praise of Alceste, during which the god spies Chaucer, looks

Digitized by Google

sternly upon him, and arraigns him presently for his scandalous presentment of Criseyde's frailty, asking if the "sixty bokës olde and newe" in his library might not have furnished him with a hundred good women against one bad. But the Queen takes his part and wins his pardon, and the pacified deity bids him make amends by eulogizing good women, and desires him to begin with Cleopatra. So we pass from the Prologue to the poem. He tells of Cleopatra's passion and her death; his spirited description of Actium is supposed to reproduce the naval fight at Sluys in 1340: observe the use of "he" and "he" for "one" and "another":

With grisly soun out goth the gretë gonne,
And heterly [fiercely] they hurtlen al at ones,
And fro the top doun cometh the grete stones.
In goth the grapenel so ful of crokes
Among the ropës and the shering-hokes.
In with the polax presseth he and he;
Behind the mast beginneth he to flee
And out agayn, and driveth him over-borde;
He stingeth him upon his sperës orde [point];
He rent the sail with hokës lyke a sythe;
He bringeth the cuppe, and biddeth hem be blythe;
He poureth pesen upon the hacches slider [slippery],
With pottës ful of lym they goon togider;
And thus the longë day in fight they spende,
Till, at the last, as everything hath ende,
Antony is spent, and put him to the flighte,
And al his folk to-go, that best go mighte.

Then follow tales of Thisbe, Dido, Hypsipile and Medea, Lucretia, Ariadne, Philomela, Phyllis, Hypermnestra, taken chiefly from Ovid, and the last unfinished. It is observable that the

Digitized by Google

Prologue to the "Man of Lawes Tale," quoting this poem as Chaucer's under the title of the "Seintes Legende of Cupyde," omits two of the ladies, Cleopatra and Philomela, and enumerates eight others, not found in the Legend as we have it. It would seem that Chaucer's plan was to write of nineteen women who were martyrs to love, and to conclude with his ideal woman Alceste. Ten of these he executed; the others have either been lost or were more probably never written. The reader will notice the pretty little balled "Hyd Absolon," the happy saying borrowed from Dante, "Envye is lavender of the Court alwey"—general washer in public of dirty linen,—and modest Lucretia gathering her clothes around her as she fell:

> For in her falling yet she haddë care
> Lest that her feet or swichë thing lay bare,
> So wel she lovëd clennesse and eek trouthe.

In this Poem Chaucer ascends to greater heights than he has hitherto attained. Read the lines in which Tennyson commemorates it, and understand from him the mood into which supreme poetry should transport us.

One unfinished prose composition belongs to these years, the TREATISE ON THE ASTROLABE, an instrument then in use, superseded later by the quadrant and the sextant, for determining the altitude of the sun or other heavenly body. We all remember the story told by the Tailor to the Sultan in the "Arabian Nights," in which the Barber rushes out from his half-shaved customer

Digitized by Google

to prove by his astrolabe the conjunction of Mercury with Mars, a phenomenon apparently lending itself to tonsorial aptitudes. Chaucer presents the instrument, in the year 1391 he tells us, to "litel Lowis my sone," then a boy ten years old. In composing this manual for his use he has availed himself of a Latin treatise by an Arabian astronomer; but writes it in English, "for Latin ne canstow yit but smal, my lyte sone." His first chapter describes the instrument, his second gives instructions for using it. There should follow Tables of Astronomical Computation, but these are lost. In a fragment which remains are rules for measuring the height of a tower. The instrument is still used in the East; specimens are preserved as curiosities in college libraries at Oxford and Cambridge: for those interested in its structure finely executed plates are given in Professor Skeat's third volume. Glancing through the pages of the treatise, we may envy the "litel sone" his tutor; for the rules are transparently clear, emphasized from time to time by "forget nat this," or "lo here the figure"; enlivened by aphorisms such as that "diverse paths leden diverse folk the righte wey to Rome"; or by a sententious reminder that in reforming the Calendar Julius Caesar did not reform the habits of the sun. Nor would the young learner fail to be diverted by his father's explanation of the "bestes" which form the zodiac signs, or by his belief, expressed later, we may remember, by Sir Andrew Aguecheek, that by each sign is governed and affected some part of the human body, "as

Digitized by Google

Aries hath thy heved, Taurus thy nekke and thy throte, Gemini thyn armholes and thyn armes."

The "Canterbury Tales," though still belonging to this Third Period, will form the subject of a special chapter. Let us recapitulate those which we have examined:

Period I.	Romaunt of the Rose. Minor Poems (many of later date). Book of the Duchesse. Anelida and Arcite.
Period II.	Parlement of Foules. Boethius. Troilus and Criseyde. Hous of Fame.
Period III.	Legend of Good Women. Treatise on the Astrolabe.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III

THE CANTERBURY TALES

THE "Canterbury Tales" exhibit at once the high-water mark of Chaucer's genius and the birth of our national poetry. Now for the first time the confusion of local dialects, and so of separate literatures, gave place to a grammatical structure universally approved as typical English, and to a poetic style determining a standard of literary excellence. Chaucer's mastery of language and dexterity in rhythm and metre, the music of his rippling verse, his fresh simplicity of diction, his graphic touch of portraiture, his identification with the spirit of his age, his revelation of the marvels latent in common sights and sounds, his passionate love of Nature, the power which he shared with Homer in an earlier, with Wordsworth in a later age, of reviving youthful sentiment in natures hardened, worn, benumbed; of shedding

> On spirits dried up and closely furled
> The freshness of the early world,

lifted him at once to the lofty pedestal on which the homage of successive ages has maintained him ever since. It is this fresh, healthy, un-

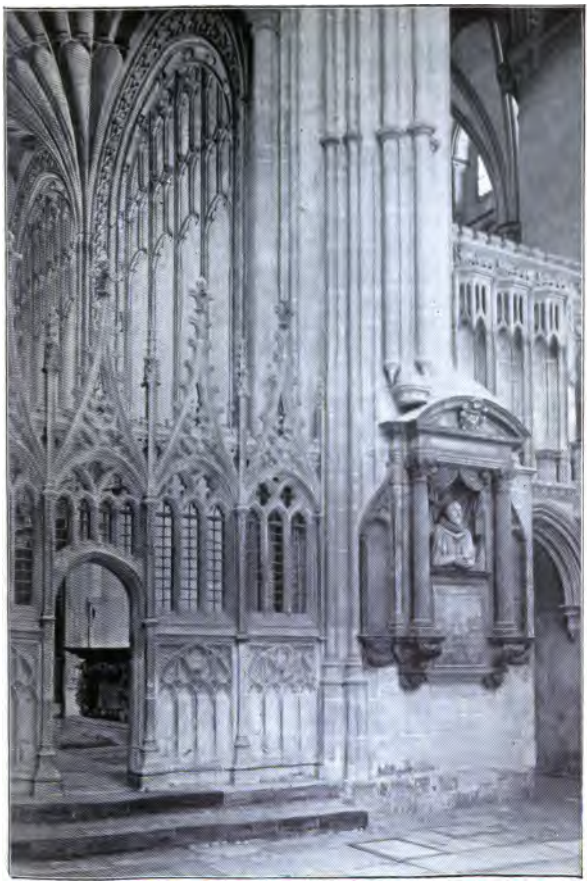
Digitized by Google

conscious joy in things around him, this receptive equanimity, this acquiescing discernment of and delight in things as they are, which mark him off from his contemporaries; from the greatest amongst them, Langland, most of all. Our eyes borrow from our hearts the hues in which things around appear to them; while Langland's sombre temperament impelled him to ignore all except the tragical aspects of humanity, and so to play, as says John Bunyan, only on the bass string of poetry, Chaucer's ear was ever vibratory, his pen responsive ever, to the lighter tones of adventure and of character, which relieve the gloom of life. He saw it, with Dante, as a pilgrimage; but while the great Italian's eyes were fixed always on the triple avenue of its awful goal, Chaucer gave himself to enjoy and to commemorate the freaks of character or of costume shown to him by the pilgrims as they passed.

The device of "end-linking" together a series of tales by a framework of incident or dialogue is very ancient. It occurs, earliest perhaps of all, in the Indian fables of Bidpai or Pilpay, quoted by Elia in his essay on "The Wedding." Such again are the "Tales of the Seven Counsellors," such the "Arabian Nights"; such the "Decameron" of Boccaccio, the "Heptameron" of Margaret of Navarre; such finally the "Canterbury Tales."

Chaucer's literary path was paved with unfulfilled intentions; like many a later bard he early conceived the idea of composing a great and

Digitized by Google



Photochrome Co. photo.]

THE SCENE OF THE MARTYRDOM IN CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

monumental poem. More than once he attempted it; but through weariness, or fastidious dissatisfaction, or the intrusion into his imagination of a more tempting scheme, he left his efforts fragmentary. The "Romaunt of the Rose" in his youth, the "Legend of Good Women" in his maturity, seem to show the same conceived but abandoned subintention; it took shape finally, though still imperfectly, in the "Canterbury Tales." Incomplete they are as we possess them, but the Prologue reveals their plan; we can trace in the Tales themselves his partial carrying out, his limited revisals, his very extensive abandonment, of the original design, through native laziness, or distraction of other work, or the clutch of disqualifying old age.

Religious pilgrimage to what Chaucer calls "ferne halwes," distant spots made sacred by the lives or martyrdoms of holy men, have formed part of the Jewish, Hindu, Mohammedan, Christian systems. Even in the present century these migrations are not unknown; in the middle ages they were acts of faith to be performed, if possible, by every believer; and from the death of Becket in 1170 until the spoliation of his tomb three hundred and fifty years later the scene of his murder in the cathedral at Canterbury was a loadstone which drew worshippers annually from all parts of England:

> And specially, from every shirës ende
> Of Englelond, to Canterbury they wende,
> The holy blisful martir for to seke,
> That hem hath holpen whan that they were seke.

Digitized by Google

In the England of the fourteenth century, as in the Palestine of our Lord's childhood, devotees travelled mostly in caravans or companies, comprising men and women gentle or simple, rich or poor, equalized for the time by a common religious purpose. In this custom Chaucer saw his chance: not otherwise could he have brought together and painted on a single canvas the many types of English society; knight, squire, and yeoman, priest and nun and friar, matron, scholar, merchant, labourer, with all of whom his many-sided life had brought him into frequent touch, and whom he knew himself well able to portray. The party is supposed to assemble at the Tabard Inn in Southwark. Chaucer gives them as twenty-nine in number,

Wel nyne and twenty in a companye,

himself apparently included. He enumerates them as follows:

1. The Knight.
2. The Squyer.
3. Their Yeman.
4. The Prioresse.
5. The Second Nonne.
6, 7, 8. The three Preestes.
9. The Monke.
10. The Frere.
11. The Marchaunt.
12. The Clerke.
13. The Man of Lawe.
14. The Frankeleyne.
15. The Haberdassher.
16. The Carpenter.
17. The Webbe (Weaver).
18. The Dyer.
19. The Tapiser.
20. The Coke.
21. The Shipman.
22. The Doctour.
23. The Wyf of Bathe.
24. The Persoun.
25. The Plowman.
26. The Miller.
27. The Manciple.
28. The Reve.
29. The Somnour (Summoner).
30. The Pardoner.
31. Chaucer himself.

Digitized by Google

This gives us thirty-one; but the three Preestes in line 163, of whom we hear nothing more, are believed to be an interpolation. One Preest we know there was, for he relates a tale: by striking out the other two as spurious we revert to the twenty-nine. To these, on the journey (line 16022, etc.), is added the Chanon's Yeman, who overtakes them. The Host of the Tabard—his name is given as Harry Bailly in the "Coke's Prologue"—is accepted as leader of the party: he proposes that each pilgrim should tell two tales as they ride to Canterbury, two more on the return journey, and to this they all agree. This would make one hundred and sixteen tales in all: in fact we have only twenty-four; Chaucer alone telling two, seven of the pilgrims telling none: and of the homeward journey we hear nothing. We learn from the text that the Knightes Tale came first in order, the Persoun's last, related just before the journey's end,

> Whan every man, save thow, has told his tale.

And further, some of the Tales, as the Coke's, Squyer's, Monke's, are unfinished; leaving it evident that the whole poem is fragmentary, many parts being unwritten or lost. It is evident, I say, now: but it was not perceived by any one till Henry Bradshaw pointed it out. He broke up the whole into twelve groups of Tales, divined their order, connected them where possible by "end-links," and brought them into harmony with the exigencies of a four days' travel, the period demanded at that time for a journey from

Digitized by Google

London to Canterbury. His conclusions, slightly modified, stand as follows in the judgement of recent critics, of Professor Skeat and Mr. Furnivall in England, of Professor ten Brink in Germany, Professor Child in America. The pilgrims start from the Tabard on April 17th; since in the second day's travel the Host

> Wiste it was the eightetethë day
> Of April, that is messager to May.

By the lynx eyes of commentators the year is discovered to have been 1387, the day of the week a Tuesday.

Then we have their itinerary thus:

TUESDAY, APRIL 17TH. They leave London, pass Deptford and Greenwich, and probably sleep at Dartford. The Tales told are classified as GROUP A; the Knightes, Miller's, Reve's, Coke's, this last being unfinished; and then ensues a gap in the narrative.

WEDNESDAY, 18TH. They reach Rochester (line 3116), and probably halt there for the night. The Tales told fall into GROUP B; the Man of Lawe's, Shipman's, Prioresse's, Chaucer's own two Tales, the Monke's, Nonne's Preest's. Then comes another gap.

THURSDAY, 19TH. They appear to reach and halt at Ospringe, near Sittingbourne. The Tales told are GROUP C, by the Doctour and Pardoner, with a gap. Then GROUP D, by the Wyf of Bathe, Frere, Sompnour, with another gap. Then GROUP E, by the Clerke and Marchaunt, these also followed by a gap.

Digitized by Google

[*From a Water-Colour by Geo. Shepherd, Collection of Mr. Evans.*

THE TABARD INN, 1810.
(Then called the Talbot.)

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

FRIDAY, 20TH. On this fourth day they arrive at Canterbury; the Tales being GROUP F, the Squyer's and Frankeleyne's, with a gap; GROUP G, the Second Nonne's and Chanon's Yeman's, with a gap; GROUP H, the Manciple's, with a gap; GROUP I, the Persoun's, which he began at 4 p.m., and which closed the list. From this classification is excluded the Plowman's Tale, printed in many of the editions, but avowedly by the author of "Piers the Plowman's Crede."

Thus much for the plan; a great improvement, let us observe, upon Boccaccio's; since while the Italian characters were all of the same age and rank, with some consequent sameness in the Tales, Chaucer's are taken out of every class in English life, from the Plowman who swinked upon the land to the verray parfit gentil knight who had fought in fifteen battles, earning in each sovereyn prys and great renown. Scope is thus given for wide variety of handling, while the personal equality of the actors is maintained by common religious motive in the pilgrimage, their camaraderie by the cheery despotism of the ever prompt and dominant, yet tactful and facile host.

I suppose that the attentive reader of this wonderful Prologue is made first of all to feel himself in presence of the most perfect story-teller in all literature. Into less than seven hundred lines are compressed the descriptions of twenty-one persons, each widely different from the rest each to all time typical of a class, yet all so graphically and individually painted; their persons, dress,

Digitized by Google

equipage, way of life, tricks of manner, ever moral characters, hit off by touches so slight yet so illuminating that, in the words of Dryden, we see every one of them as distinctly as if we had sat with them at supper. In a single line, sometimes even by a single word, the versimilitude is ineffaceably fixed. We are bidden to note the Knight's bismotered gipoun (armour-soiled cassock); the Yeman's pecok arwes, cropped head, brown face; the Squire's curly locks, gay flower-embroidered trappings, short long-sleeved gown. Into the sketch of pretty, pious Madame Eglentyne, a whole biography is compressed; her mild oath by St. Eloy, her sweet voice in singing *at* the service divyne, her French, pure and fetis but smacking of her Stratford convent, her delicate feeding at table, noticeable in an age when forks were not, the tenderness that wept over a trapped mouse or a beaten hound, her modest pleated collar setting off the well-shaped nose, gray eyes, small rosy mouth, white broad forehead, even to her rosary of green and coral beads, and the gold brooch, bearing, though with a very different significance, poor Hester Prynne's fantastic letter. At once minute and bewitching, a pre-Raphaelite might limn from it a portrait, an anchorite own its charm. After her rides the jolly, worldly, well-mounted Monk, the bells on his bridle jingling, with costly sleeves of rich gray fur, and an elaborate gold pin which confines his hood; his bald head that shoon as any glas, bright sparkling eyes, smart boots of soft close-fitting leather. The bold licentious Friar, strong, white-necked, with

Digitized by Google

cape of double worsted, fashionable lisp, tippet stuffed with knives for pretty women, as missionaries carry beads to savages, beguiles the ride with stringed instrument and "mery note," skilled in both alike, as Melpomene in Horace's Ode to Virgil. The Merchant is marked by forked beard, motley dress, Flanders beaver hat; the scholar by lean horse, threadbare cloak, sententious brevity in speech; the Lawyer's homely robe is bound with a barred silk girdle, his tongue abounding in legal pedantries,

> Nowher so bisy a man as he there nas,
> And yet he semed bisier than he was.

Note that roguish aside, and look out for many more of the same sort. In the rich Franklin, or country gentleman, the St. Julian or proxenus of his neighbourhood, his doors always open, his hall table always spread, we recognize a Sir Roger de Coverley of the fourteenth century. The five tradesmen keep together, wearing the livery of their gild, their silver-handled daggers showing them well-to-do. The hardy, conscienceless, weather-beaten skipper, mounted upon a rouncy (Rozinante or inferior hack), rides badly, as a sailor would, his gown of falding or frieze flowing down over his knee; but no one will smile at a man who in fight upon the high seas had made many a beaten foreigner to walk the plank. The Physician is a dandy, wears silken robe of red and blue, is learned in medical text-books, treats his patients by astral conjunctions and natural

Digitized by Google

equipage, way of life, tricks of manner, even moral characters, hit off by touches so slight yet so illuminating that, in the words of Dryden, we see every one of them as distinctly as if we had sat with them at supper. In a single line, sometimes even by a single word, the versimilitude is ineffaceably fixed. We are bidden to note the Knight's bismotered gipoun (armour-soiled cassock); the Yeman's pecok arwes, cropped head, brown face; the Squire's curly locks, gay flower-embroidered trappings, short long-sleeved gown. Into the sketch of pretty, pious Madame Eglentyne, a whole biography is compressed; her mild oath by St. Eloy, her sweet voice in singing at the service divyne, her French, pure and fetis but smacking of her Stratford convent, her delicate feeding at table, noticeable in an age when forks were not, the tenderness that wept over a trapped mouse or a beaten hound, her modest pleated collar setting off the well-shaped nose, gray eyes, small rosy mouth, white broad forehead, even to her rosary of green and coral beads, and the gold brooch, bearing, though with a very different significance, poor Hester Prynne's fantastic letter. At once minute and bewitching, a pre-Raphaelite might limn from it a portrait, an anchorite own its charm. After her rides the jolly, worldly, well-mounted Monk, the bells on his bridle jingling, with costly sleeves of rich gray fur, and an elaborate gold pin which confines his hood; his bald head that shoon as any glas, bright sparkling eyes, smart boots of soft close-fitting leather. The bold licentious Friar, strong, white-necked, with

Digitized by Google

cape of double worsted, fashionable lisp, tippet stuffed with knives for pretty women, as missionaries carry beads to savages, beguiles the ride with stringed instrument and "mery note," skilled in both alike, as Melpomene in Horace's Ode to Virgil. The Merchant is marked by forked beard, motley dress, Flanders beaver hat; the scholar by lean horse, threadbare cloak, sententious brevity in speech; the Lawyer's homely robe is bound with a barred silk girdle, his tongue abounding in legal pedantries,

> Nowher so bisy a man as he there nas,
> And yet he semed bisier than he was.

Note that roguish aside, and look out for many more of the same sort. In the rich Franklin, or country gentleman, the St. Julian or proxenus of his neighbourhood, his doors always open, his hall table always spread, we recognize a Sir Roger de Coverley of the fourteenth century. The five tradesmen keep together, wearing the livery of their gild, their silver-handled daggers showing them well-to-do. The hardy, conscienceless, weather-beaten skipper, mounted upon a rouncy (Rozinante or inferior hack), rides badly, as a sailor would, his gown of falding or frieze flowing down over his knee; but no one will smile at a man who in fight upon the high seas had made many a beaten foreigner to walk the plank. The Physician is a dandy, wears silken robe of red and blue, is learned in medical text-books, treats his patients by astral conjunctions and natural

Digitized by Google

magic; "his studie was but litel on the Bible" is the sly parenthesis.

With saucy appreciation he portrays the Wife of Bath. Bold-faced and frolicsome she sits her ambling nag; astride no doubt, for good Queen Anne's side-saddles were slow to gain plebeian approval; her comely limbs encased in scarlet hose, "ful streite y-teyd," like those of Herodias' daughter in the Lincoln Cathedral window; a pair of spurs upon her feet, the teeth in her bold mouth set far apart, a sign in those days of good fortune and perhaps of something else; the many-folded, finely textured kerchief on her head surmounted by a hat "as brood as is a bokeler or a targe"; her masterful character hit off by the statement that in church at home, when the women carried their offerings to the altar, she ever took priority of them all, as the squire's wife in a country church to-day precedes her fellow-sinners in the procession to the communion table. The Parish Priest is drawn with a tender loving hand. Poor in purse, rich in holy thoughts and works, learned, diligent in his parish, bountiful out of his penury, a shepherde and no mercenarie, long-suffering towards evil-doers, yet knowing how to rebuke,

> Christës lore and his apostles twelve
> He taughte, and first he folwed it himselve.

Do we not catch an echo of this in Goldsmith's Vicar? yet more distinct in his village preacher. He too shunned promotion, relieved the wretched

Digitized by Google

out of his poor forty pounds a year, could pity, yet could chide:

> He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,
> Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way.

The slender, choleric, clean-shaven Reve rides last of the company on his dapple gray cob, the Miller with his bagpipe and coarse, repulsive, evil face precedes. Note too, with all this unsparing sharpness of delineation, the relenting afterthoughts of sympathy and allowance which ever restrain the satire from over-harshness. His selfish, wicked monks and friars have their human reconcilable side; the bloated, hypocritical, malicious Summoner is a cheery comrade; "a beter felaw sholdë men noght fynde"; even the yet more odious Pardoner, in whose portraiture breaks out the Teutonic disgust against the sale of indulgences which a century and a half later was to transform the pious monk of Wittenberg into an iconoclast, could read, sing, preach valiantly in church; the foul-mouthed Miller "hadde a thombe of gold"; the crafty Merchant is a "worthy man withal"; the silent Oxford scholar's sparing talk was ever sowning in (tending towards) moral vertu.

Nor can we fail, I think, to observe the large catholicity of his portraits; each a type contemporary with time, not a transcript from a single century; their traits essential, not provincial, or temporary, or casual. Few of the great character painters in literature attain, as did Chaucer, as did Shakespeare, this universality of

Digitized by Google

presentment. Recall from later-born romance the figures by which our memories are peopled; Lovelace, and Parson Adams, and Mrs. Primrose, and Uncle Toby, and the Baron of Bradwardine, and Mrs. Nickleby, and Foker, and Jane Eyre, and Mrs. Poyser—the list might lengthen to the crack of doom—some are avowedly eccentric, all individual and special, all dependent on their setting, not to be detached as broadly suitable to any circumstance, time, place. Jane Austen's creations indeed are typical; Anne Elliott and Emma Woodhouse and Elizabeth Bennett will belong to the close of the thirtieth as to the opening of the nineteenth century; but to each of them a volume was given, while the Prioress and the Franklin and the Wife of Bath were forged within the limits of less than forty lines apiece.

And then, after recognizing and admiring the consummate art of his characterization, we return to marvel at the naturalness and simplicity of his diction. I have before compared him to Jeremy Taylor; and with each successive reading I find the resemblance strengthened. His style shows humour in common with Fuller, discursiveness in common with Burton; but in the birdlike warble, the negligent felicity of phrasing, the succession of co-ordinate sentences capturing by their cumulative effect, they preluded the subtle tincture which etherealized the prose of Taylor. Neither the poet nor the preacher, as some one has said, can be sampled by detached sentences; the charm lies in the continuous flow.

Digitized by Google

Each attempt to analyze Chaucer convinces only that he may not be analyzed; returning from each perusal as we come in from a walk on a fresh day in spring, we find ourselves following him still with conscious yet uncritical interest; "he prattles inadvertently away, and like the fairy princess in the tale, lets fall a pearl at every word."

So the company is gathered, the actors are portrayed; it remains only to quicken them into speech. The poet turns from them to us, takes us into his confidence, consults us almost as to the course his explication is to follow, with charmingly simulated modesty bespeaks our indulgence for his shortcomings:

> But first I pray yow of your curteisye
> That ye n'arrette [impute] it nat my vileinye
> Thogh that I pleynly speke in this matere.
> In this ye knowen also as wel as I,
> Who-so shal telle a tale after a man,
> He moot reherce, as ny as ever he can,
> Everich a word, if it be in his charge,
> Al speke he never so rudelicke and large;
> Or ellës he moot telle his tale untrewe,
> Or feynë thing, or findë wordës newe.
> Crist spak him-self ful brode in holy writ,
> And, wel ye woot, no vileinye is it.
> Eek Plato seith, who-so that can him rede,
> The wordës mote be cosin to the dede.
> Also I preye you to foryeve it me,
> Al have I nat set folk in hir degree
> Here in this tale, as that they sholdë stonde,
> My wit is short, ye may wel understonde.

Supper over, the tale-telling scheme is propounded by the Host, himself not the worst

Digitized by Google

drawn figure in the vast cartoon, and accepted by the guests. All pass to bedward, after payment made, "whan that we haddë maad our rekeninges." Gathering early next morning "alle in a flok," they ride as far as St. Thomas a Waterings, at the second milestone on the Canterbury road. Here they halt and "draw cut": the shortest cut or lot falls to the Knight, who is to tell therefore the opening tale.

It will aid us before proceeding to arrange narrators and tales in order:

First day.	1. Knightes Tale.	Palamon and Arcitë.
	2. Milleres Tale	Nicholas and Absolon.
	3. Reves Tale	The Trumpington Miller.
	4. Cokes Tale	The Prentis (unfinished).
Second day.	5. Man of Lawes Tale. . .	Custance.
	6. Shipmans Tale	Dan John and the Merchant's Wife.
	7. Prioresses Tale	The Jews and the Child.
	8. Chaucers Tales	Sir Thopas.
	and	Meliboeus.
	9. Monkes Tale	Viri Illustres.
	10. Nonnes Preestes Tale . .	Chaunticlere and Pertelote.
Third day.	11. Doctours Tale	Virginia.
	12. Pardoners Tale	The Dangers of Drunkenness.
	13. Wyf of Bathes Prologue .	Her Husbands.
	13. " " Tale . .	Wife's Mastery.
	14. Freres Tale	The Somnour and the Fiend.
	15. Somnours Tale	Thomas and the Friar.
	16. Clerkes Tale	Grisildis.
	17. Marchantes Tale . . .	January and May.
Fourth day.	18. Squyers Tale	Cambuscan bold.
	19. Frankeleynes Tale . . .	Arviragus and Dorigene.
	20. Second Nonnes Tale . .	Saint Cecilia.
	21. Chanon Yemans Tale . .	The Alchemist.
	22. Maunciples Tale. . . .	The Crow.
	23. Persones Tale.	A Sermon.

Digitized by Google

THE KNIGHTES TALE, OF PALAMON AND ARCITE

Theseus, hero of many a mediaeval romance, has captured and holds in prison two Theban knights, Palamon and Arcite. From their window in the prison they see fair Emelye, the King's sister-in-law, walking in the garden, just as, forty years later, the captive poet, afterwards King James I, Chaucer's admirer and imitator, saw, in fact, not fiction, the Lady Joan Beaufort walking in the Windsor pleasaunce. Both knights fall in love with Emelye, and, close friends before, become bitter rivals. Arcite is liberated and sent home to Thebes, pines in absence from his fair one, and returns to Athens in disguise. Here he encounters Palamon escaped from prison, and they agree to fight for the lady. Their duel is interrupted by Theseus, who ordains that at the end of a year they shall appear at his Court, each bringing with him a hundred knights, for a grand tournament, the victor to have the hand of Emelye. The day arrives, with it the two knights and their supporters, and the lists are set for the combat. At early dawn Emelye, Palamon, Arcite, go severally forth to pray to Diana, Venus, Mars. The answers are equivocal, for the gods are at issue as to the event, until Saturn decides that Arcite shall be the conqueror, yet Palamon have Emelye. So it turns out. Arcite is victor, and is accepted by the blushing Emelye; but riding beside her is flung from his horse, is mortally bruised, and dies in the arms of his lady, who after a due period of mourning gives herself to

Digitized by Google

Palamon. The poem, like the Prologue, had received its maker's finishing touch, and is in his finest style. Take as a specimen Arcite issuing forth on May morning to pluck green boughs and flowers:

The bisy larkë, messager of day,
Salueth in her song the morwe gray;
And fyry Phebus ryseth up so brighte
That al the orient laugheth of the lighte,
And with his stremës dryeth in the greves [groves]
The silver dropës hanging on the leves.
And Arcite, that is in the Court royal
With Thesëus, his squyer principal,
Is risen, and loketh on the myrie day,
And for to doon his observaunce to May,
Remembring on the point of his desyr,
He on a courser, sterting as the fyr,
Is riden into the feeldës, him to pleye,
Out of the court, were it a mile or tweye.
And loud he song ageyn the sonnë shene:
"May, with alle thy flourës and thy grene,
Wel-comë be thou, fairë fresshë May,
I hope that I som grenë getë may."

Only an eye-witness of such scenes could have so described the tournament: we know that in his youth Chaucer must have been present at those brilliant pageants of mimic war in France; while of the lists and their arrangement he had practical experience, as we have seen (p. 14).

The heraudes lefte hir priking up and doun,
Now ringen trompës loud and clarioun;
Ther is namore to seyn, but west and est
In goon the speres ful sadly in arest;
In goth the sharpë spere into the syde,
Ther seen men who can juste, and who can ryde.
Ther shiveren shaftës upon sheeldës thikke.
He feleth thurgh the herte-sporn the prikke.

Digitized by Google

CHAUCER AS A CANTERBURY PILGRIM.

From the Miniature in the Ellesmere MS. at Bridgewater House.
(By permission of the Royal Society of Literature.)

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Up springen sperës twenty foot on highte,
Out goon the swerdës as the silver brighte;
The helmës they to-hewen and to-shrede,
Out breste the blood, with sternë stremës rede.
With mighty maces the bones they to-breste,
He throgh the thikkeste of the throng gan threste,
Ther stomblen stedes stronge, and doun goth al.

Notice the alliteration in these last lines, and see p. 84. Turning then characteristically from high knights and dames to the rough spectator populace, he repeats their chatter, which he gives us again in the "Squyer's Tale," and which his quick all-attentive ears must have often overheard:

Divyninge of thise Theban knightës two,
Somme seyden thus, somme seyde, it shal be so,
Somme helden with him with the blakë berd,
Somme with the ballëd [bald], somme with the thikkeherd [haired];
Somme seyde, *he* loked grim and he wolde fighte,
He hath a sparth [battle-axe] of twenty pound of wighte,—
Thus was the hallë ful of divyninge,
Long after that the sonnë gan to springe.

The poem was rewritten for its place in the "Canterbury Tales," having been first composed as a separate work under the name of "Palamon and Arcyte" ("Legend of Good Women," line 420). It was a somewhat close imitation of Boccaccio's "Teseide," but in its present form is so enlarged and altered as to have become a splendid original poem. It was modernized by Dryden, and forms the theme of Fletcher's "Two Noble Kinsmen."

The company thank the Knight for his "noble

Digitized by Google

storie," and the Host calls upon the Monk. But Robin the Miller, fuddled with his morning draught of ale, bursts in importunately, tells a coarse drunkard's tale, and is followed by Osewold the Reve with another of the same sort. In both are bits characteristic of the master's hand, as in the costume of the carpenter's wife, and the portrait of the parish clerk. Chaucer himself bids us, if we be fastidious, to

Turne over the leef and chese another tale:

and with every allowance for the freedom of the times, every readiness to dissociate moral depravity from external licence, we may wish that they had not been the product of Chaucer's pen. We would recall in this connection an acute discovery by Professor Skeat, that the indecent Tales were all written after the death of the poet's wife. Next to these comes Roger the Coke, who announces a story of a hostileer or innkeeper, which ceases after fifty-eight lines. "Of this Coke's Tale maked Chaucer namore," say the Manuscripts, and the broken tale is followed by a long gap.

The SECOND DAY begins at 10 o'clock in the morning, an earlier tale being probably lost; and the Host calls upon the Man of Lawe, who takes occasion to enumerate the Tales which Chaucer had intended to include in his "Legend of Good Women." He has by him, he goes on to say, a tale "taughte him" long ago, which he will now relate. This means, what we know from other sources, and what is shown by its stanza form, that his TALE OF CUSTANCE was an early com-

Digitized by Google

position, its prologue, in the same metre, being added at the time of revision. It is found also, slightly altered, in Gower's "Confessio Amantis," both he and Chaucer being indebted to a French original in prose by one Nicholas Trivet, a Dominican friar, who died about 1334. Parts of the Tale have been traced to other sources, as the "Pecorone" of Ser Giovanni Fiorentinus; but much is added by Chaucer, and the whole is rewritten, not translated. The story is wildly impossible. Custance, a virgin beautiful and devout, daughter to the Emperor of Rome, is wedded to the Sowdan of Surrye (Syria), who for her love becomes Christian with all his nobles. His mother, a staunch Moslem, murders all the converts, and sends Custance adrift upon the sea. For three years she is tossed by winds and waves, which carry her at last to the Northumbrian coast. There she is received hospitably by a benevolent constable and his wife, whom she promptly converts; and is shortly after married to Ælla, King of Northumbria. By the machinations of his mother she is once more sent to sea, with the little son whom she has borne to the King, and floats to Rome, her ancient birthplace, where she is entertained by her aunt, who knows her not, until her Northumbrian husband, a pilgrim to Rome, is reunited to her, and their child becomes Emperor, and lives "Christenly."

"A thrifty tale for the nones!" cries the Host, and calls upon the Persoun; but the rough Shipman protests. The Persoun is a "Loller," he declares; will "sow cokkel [lolium] in our clenë

Digitized by Google

corn"; "my joly body shall a talë tell." It is told; rather too much in the style of the Miller and the Reve for modern taste, yet hitting, as we see by the Host's comment, the fancy of his liberal audience. He turns next to the Prioresse,

> As curteisly as it had been a mayde.
> My lady Prioressë, by your leve,
> So that I wiste I sholdë yow nat greve,
> I woldë demen that ye tellen sholde
> A talë next, if so were that ye wolde.
> Now wol ye vouchë-sauf, my lady dere?
> Gladly, quod she, and seyede as ye shall here.

Her story, modernized by Wordsworth, is a variant of certain legends current in England at the time, the best known perhaps being "Hugh of Lincoln," the tale of a Christian child murdered by Jews. A little seven-year-old chorister angers the Jews of his town by singing the "Alma Redemptoris Mater" daily on his way to school. They waylay him, cut his throat, and cast him into a pit, but still the corpse sings on; for the Virgin has laid upon his tongue a miraculous grain of corn. It is removed, the song ceases, and the child is buried. The tale hushes the company into silence, which is broken by the Host, who addresses himself to Chaucer:

> And seyde thus, what man artow? quod he;
> Thou lokest as thou woldest finde an hare,
> For ever up-on the ground I see thee stare.
> Approchë neer, and loke up merily.
> Now war yow, Sirs, and lat this man have place.
> He in the waast is shape as wel as I;
> This were a popet in an arm t'enbrace
> For any womman, smal and fair of face.

Digitized by Google

He semeth elvish by his contenaunce,
For unto no wight doth he daliaunce.

The poet responds with the TALE OF SIR THOPAS, in an unequal seven-line stanza borrowed from the French of Guillaume de Machault. It came to be known as "rime royal" from its use by King James in the "King's Quhair." It reappears in Gray's "Lines on the Drowned Cat," in Wordsworth's "Ruth," and in several poems of the "Christian Year." Chaucer is supposed to have intended the lines as a burlesque, "to ridicule," says Tyrwhitt, "the palpable gross fictions of the common Rimers of that age." So Miss Austen is supposed to have burlesqued Mrs. Ratcliffe's romances in "Northanger Abbey"; but there, as here, the extravaganza is so intrinsically good that we value it for its own sake. "Sir Thopas" seems to me quite equal to many admired ballads in "Percy's Reliques"; its saucy, ludicrous touches are not obtruded; we should much prefer its continuance to the virtuous and moral tale which takes it place. So did not think the Host, who after eight and twenty stanzas interrupts indignantly,

Myn erës aken of thy drasty speche,
Now swich a rym the devel I biteche.
Lat see wher thou canst tellen aught in geste,
Or telle in prosë somwhat at the leste,
In which ther be som mirthe or som doctryne.

So then we have the long prose tale of MELIBŒUS, translated from a French original, "Le Livre de Melibee et de Dame Prudence," glorifying the wisdom of Melibœus's wife Prudence,

Digitized by Google

who dissuades him from the prosecution of an ugly quarrel, and by her lenient words brings his foes to an apology. Its profuse quotations and deferential adroitness render it readable, though rather dull; nor can we understand why the poet should ascribe to himself a tale with one exception the least animated in the collection. The Host, however, greatly approves it; wishes his own wife could have been present;

> I haddë lever than a barel ale
> That goodë lief my wyf hadde herd this tale:

then, with compliments on his fair outside and "mery chere," calls upon the Monk to speak. He tells no jovial tale, but a series of tragedies, portions apparently of what Chaucer had at one time contemplated as an independent work, the careers of notable persons, VIRI ILLUSTRES, who have fallen from high estate. They include Scriptural, classical, secular heroes; Nebuchadnezzar and Sampson, Hercules, Alexander and Nero, Queen Zenobia, Don Pedro of Spain, Pierre de Lusignan of Cyprus, and Ugolino, whose ghastly tragedy he adapts from Dante. They are written in the eight-line stanza, learned from the French Eustache Deschamps, which he has used only once before, in his acrostic to the Virgin. The idea, here incomplete, was carried out by Lydgate in his "Fall of Princes," and may have suggested the "Mirror for Magistrates," in the sixteenth century. In the story of Sampson, line 3215, "He slow [slew] and al to-rentë the leoun," will explain an archaic use in Judges, ix,

Digitized by Google

53, "and all to-brake his scull." The stories are told trippingly; that of Zenobia will be new to those who were not brought up on Miss Edgeworth's "Early Lessons." Of them, however, as of "Sir Thopas," the audience become tired: the Knight interposes with a protest against the depressing nature of the tragedies, and the Host vigorously supports him. But for the clinking of the bells on the monk's bridle, he says, they would all have fallen asleep: and he calls upon Sir John, the Nonnes Preeste or Chaplain, to tell some merry matter, "swich thing as may our hertës glade." Sir John responds with the lively tale of CHAUNTECLEER AND PERTELOTE, since modernized by Dryden; the Cock carried off by, but outwitting, the Fox. Chaunticleer wakes one morning on his perch in terror, having dreamed of a terrible beast which threatened to assault him. His wife Pertelote laughs dreams to scorn; assigns them to indigestion, and prescribes lauriol, centaure and fumeterye, ellebor and ivy, with a few worms as laxatives, throwing in learned citations from many authors; for in all Chaucer's tales the interlocutors are nothing if not erudite. Her lord is unconvinced, argues that the dream betokens mischief, and so it proves. "Daun Russell," the fox, prowling near the yard, seizes Chauntecleer by the neck and bears him off: but in defiance of vulpine tradition is outwitted by the cleverness of the cock, who breaks from his mouth and flies up into a tree. We note as we read the *ménage* of a poor widow, the cock's owner, which would sound luxurious to a

Digitized by Google

labourer's wife in recent and in present times; the belief that Adam was created in the month of March, the ill-luck attached to Friday. Here is the chase after the fox:

> Ran Colle our dogge, and Talbot, and Gerland,
> And Malkin, with a distaf in hir hand;
> Ran cow and calf, and eek the verray hogges,
> So were they fered for berking of the dogges,
> And shouting of the men and wimmen eek;
> They ronnë so, hem thoughte hir hertë breke.
> They yellenden, as feendës doon in helle;
> The dokës cryden as men wolde hem quelle;
> The gees for ferë flowen over the trees;
> Out of the hyvë cam the swarm of bees;
> So hidous was the noyse, ah benedicite!
> Certes, he Jakkë Straw and his meynee,
> He madë never shoutës half so shrille,
> Whan that they wolden any Fleming kille,
> As thilkë day was maad upon the fox.

The Host applauds the "mery" tale, and there follows a gap, closing the second day.

As the THIRD DAY opens we find the Doctour telling the old Roman history of VIRGINIA, nominally out of Livy, really from "Le Roman de la Rose." She is one of the saints of universal story, and in painting her fairness of form and nature Chaucer rises to his full height, though the end is somewhat hurried, as if destined to later amplification. The Host is so moved by it that, like Dr. Johnson's hermit hoar, he calls for "a draught of moyste and corny ale" to recover him; and then appeals to the Pardoner for his tale. The pilgrims, knowing their man, cry out that they will have no ribaudrye:

> Tel us som moral thing, that we may lere
> Som wit, and thannë wol we gladly here.

Digitized by Google

So the Pardoner begins. He is a vicious man, he owns, and to tell lies is his profession; nevertheless he will preach them a sermon against intemperance; and narrates a legend on the DANGERS OF DRUNKENNESS; of three varlets who conspired to slay Death, and of what befell them. The story is outlined in the collection of Italian tales called the "Cento Novelle Antiche," and is said to be of Asiatic origin. Three riotous fellows find a treasure of gold florins. They must wait for night and darkness before removing it, and meanwhile send one of their number to the town for food and wine. Him they concert to kill on his return, and do so; but he with similar intent has brought poisoned wine, of which they drink, and die. Having concluded, the Pardoner betakes himself to his professional rascality, pressing on the company pardons and relics out of his wallet, till the Host breaks in with an objurgation so violent as to threaten a quarrel; but the Knight interposing restores peace.

To the WYFS TALE OF BATHE there is a long Prologue, but no end-link or introduction by the Host. This Prologue appears to be entirely of Chaucer's own invention, and is known to English readers from Pope's modernized version. It is the cleverest and most amusing, but perhaps the most repugnant to modern reticence of all the episodes. The unblushing, lively, five-times-wedded dame, at once frankly sensual and richly humorous, naked but not ashamed, with exultant complacency details and justifies her past; recounts her domestic management old and new,

Digitized by Google

fortifying her fleshliness with historical parallels and Bible texts. They must pardon her plain-speaking; it is all in pure innocence,

> For myn ententë nis but for to pleye.

She is growing old now—worse the luck!

> But, lord Crist! whan that it remembreth me
> Up-on my yowthe, and on my jollitee,
> It tikleth me about myn hertë rote.
> Unto this day it dooth myn hertë bote
> That I have had my world as in my tyme.

The whole belongs, as Mr. Elwin leniently points out—in excuse for Chaucer, not for Pope—to times more outspoken than our own; and the portrait finds a necessary place in Chaucer's gallery, because the gay, defiant, cloth-manufacturing voluptuary whom it depicts held a prominent and essential place in the society of the Middle Ages. Her tale which follows, of the LOATHLY LADY, is decent, and is common to many literatures. A foul old hag saves a young knight from death on condition that he will wed her. His reluctant obedience to his obligation breaks a spell under which she lay, and she becomes a beautiful young damsel in his arms. It is told also, and told tediously, by Gower in the story of "Florent," is retold by Dryden, and presented by Walter Scott in his ballad of "King Henrie." The lady's definition of gentility is peculiar to Chaucer, and is inculcated by him elsewhere;

> Loke who that is most vertuous alway,
> Privee and apert [secretly and openly], and most entendeth ay

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE CANTE

From the eng

THE CANT

From the

Digitized by Google

Y PILGRIMS.
after Stothard.

RY PILGRIMS.
ving by Blake.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

To do the gentil dedes that he can,
And tak him for the grettest gentilman.
. . . for God, of his goodnesse,
Wol that of Him we clayme our gentilnesse,
For of our eldres may we no-thing clayme
But temporel thing, that man may hurte and mayme.

During this narration the Friar and the Sompnour have several times broken out in mutual gibes; and propose in their turn of tale-telling to indulge the hatred which the two classes harboured against each other: the Friar, who claimed exemption from ecclesiastical jurisdiction, being naturally obnoxious to episcopal officials like the Summoner. So the Friar tells of a Sompnour carried away by the fiend, and the Sompnour retorts with a revolting story of a grasping, greedy friar's discomfiture by his intended victim. From the first we learn the knavery of churchmen and their functionaries in those days, and are helped to understand the rapid spread of Lollardism: the second is a merciless portrait of the begging friar as Chaucer knew him. The close of the last tale is to us disgusting; though not worse, perhaps, than several of Dean Swift's poems. From the fact that the great lady of the village listens to and joins in discussing its most unsavoury details, we learn once more how much of course it was, even amongst the most polished classes, to speak openly of subjects scouted as impossible to-day; how in passing judgement on the morality of any writer the manners of his time must be taken into account.

On this tale no comment is offered by the Host, or the end-link more probably is lost. He

Digitized by Google

turns to the Clerke of Oxenford, from whom he demands "no sermon or sophyme," but a "merie tale." The Clerke will tell them the Tale of PATIENT GRISILDIS, which he learned at Padua from Fraunceys Petrark,

> Whose rethorykë sweete
> Enlumined al Itaille of poetrye,
> As Linian did of philosophye,
> Or lawe, or other art particuler.
> But deeth, that wol nat suffre us dwellen here
> But as it were the twinkling of an ye,
> Hem both hath slain, and allë shul we dye.

From these lines two interesting facts emerge. Chaucer learned the tale from Petrarch before 1374, in which year the Italian died. His embassy to Italy was in 1372-1373, when the two must have met at Padua. Petrarch, we know from himself, was so fascinated by Boccaccio's "Tale of Griselda" that he committed it to memory, was wont to repeat it to his friends, and made from it a Latin version. This Chaucer must have obtained and translated in 1373. Now "Linian," the Canonist Giovanni de Lignano, here mentioned as dead, died in 1383. The tale therefore, written about 1373, was revised for the "Canterbury Tales," with addition of its prologue, its concluding stanzas, and its Envoy, later than 1383. The original source of the tale is uncertain; Petrarch in a letter to Boccaccio says that he had heard the story several years before: the heroine is even reported by some writers to have been a real personage. It became extraordinarily popular; more than twenty French

Digitized by Google

translations are recorded; in England it was acted in 1599 under the title of "Patient Grizzel," and it reappears in several of our later ballads. It is a sermon on the text of two words, still surviving in our Marriage Service, which, I suppose, all women and many men would like to see erased. Walter, a great nobleman, marries a beautiful girl of low birth. To test her obedience he subjects her to a succession of outrageous trials; she remains calmly patient and loyal under all. Notwithstanding the beauty of the poetry, the husband's insatiable, prolonged, and cruel curiosity is to present day readers not so much vexatious as torturing. Chaucer himself appends to it an apology, doubts if a Grisilde could be found today, exhorts all women, whether they be "arche wyves or sclendre," of temperaments, that is, dominant or submissive, to "stonde at defence," and suffer no such treatment:

If thou be ſair, ther folk ben in presence,
Shew thou thy visage and thyn apparaille;
If thou be foul, be free of thy dispence,
To getë thee freendës ay do thy travaille;
Be ay of chere as light as leef on linde,
And lat him [the jealous husband] care, and wepe, and wringe, and waille.

"Weeping and wayling, care, and other sorwe,
I know y-nogh, on even and a-morwe,"

interrupts the Marchaunt, as, he adds, do all we married men. Come then, says the Host, for a change from Grisilde's patience, tell us something from your own experience of a wife's cursedness. So follows the Marchaunt's Tale of JANUARY

Digitized by Google

AND MAY, the old husband and the young wife. Its source is unknown, perhaps Oriental; the incident of the pear-tree, says Tyrwhitt, from a Latin fable by one Adolphus in 1315. The theme afforded scope for grossness, and this seems to have recommended the poem to Pope for an imitation more free than the original. He converts Chaucer's artless frankness into the deliberate polish of a later age; an age which would have resented what in Chaucer's time was inoffensive, just as to-day, says Croker, "words uttered innocently by rustics in a cottage would be evidence of depravity if spoken by a man of education in a drawing-room." Yet into this loose tale of a deceiving wife Chaucer has injected his passionate eulogy on married life:

> A wyf! a! Seintë Marie, ben'cite!
> How might a man have any adversitee
> That hath a wyf? certes, I can nat seye.
> The blissë which that is bitwixe hem tweye
> Ther may no tongë telle, or hertë thinke.
> If he be povre, she helpeth him to swinke;
> She kepeth his good, and wasteth never a deel;
> All that hir housbonde lust hir lyketh weel.
> O blisful ordre of wedlok precious,
> Thou art so mery, and eek so vertuous,
> That every man that halt him worth a leek,
> Upon his barë knees oghte al his lyf
> Thanken his god that him hath sent a wyf.

In the Pluto and Proserpina of the tale some have seen the prototypes of Shakespeare's Oberon and Titania. Those who know their "Merchant of Venice" will remember in a speech by Jessica January's fear lest perfect felicity on earth should

Digitized by Google

disqualify him for heaven; and in his "bet than old beefe is the tendre veel" lovers of Walter Scott will recall Hayraddin Maugrabbin's comment on Quentin Durward's love preference. A gap in the story follows, and the Third Day comes to an end.

In the FOURTH DAY at prime, 9 a.m., the Host turns politely to the Squire, with the deferential "ye" and "you" instead of the familiar "thou" which had sufficed for meaner members of the party, and craves of him a tale of love. There follows the alas! unfinished STORY OF CAMBUSCAN. Of its source no more can be said than that it is "Arabian fiction engrafted on Gothic chivalry." The description of Cambuscan's Court is traced by Professor Skeat to the "Travels" of Marco Polo. The fragment, what there is of it, is tantalizing, occupying us with the uninteresting love sorrows of the falcon instead of pursuing the virtues of steed, glass, ring, and sword.

The Frankeleyne is loud in admiration of the tale and the narrator, wishes that his own graceless son resembled the Squyer in gentil wit, eloquence, and feeling. But he is cut short by the Host, who bids him tell his own tale if talk he must. So we get from him the Romaunt of ARVIRAGUS AND DORIGENE, taken, he tells us, from an old Breton Laye. Dorigene is a loving and devoted wife. In the absence of her husband Arviragus, his squire Aurelius makes love to her. To silence him, she declares that she will never listen to his plea until the high rocks lining the Breton coast hard by their castle are removed

Digitized by Google

and sunk into the sea. By the aid of a magician and under promise of a thousand pounds he produces a glamour through which the rocks seem to have disappeared, and claims her promise. She proposes to slay herself, but first relates the distressing position to her husband, who decides that rather than break her plighted word she must give herself to Aurelius. She goes to him weeping; but he, learning from her the action of Arviragus, generously frees her from her promise; and the magician, not to be outdone in liberality, forgoes his promised fee.

Lordinges, this question wolde I askë now,
Which was the mostë free [generous], as thinketh yow?
Now telleth me, er that ye further wende,
I can na-more, my tale is at an ende.

A curious question: one wishes it could have been discussed by the auditors, as were the tales in the "Heptameron": as it is, each reader may answer it for himself. The lady's perplexity is finely told, and the forbearance of Aurelius comes as a dexterous surprise. Her horror of the rocks and breakers which she fears may wreck her returning husband's ship is finely turned by Gay in his exquisite ballad "'Twas when the seas were roaring." Here, as in so many poems, Chaucer shows his familiarity with magical and astrological jargon.

The end-link here is wanting, and we plunge without introduction into the Second Nonnes Tale of SEINTE CECILE. It was written by Chaucer long before, Mr. Furnivall thinks in 1373, as the "Lyf of Seint Cecile," under which

Digitized by Google

title it is mentioned in the Prologue to the "Legend of Good Women." It is translated from the "Golden Legend," a popular collection of stories in Latin dating from the thirteenth century; a somewhat dull narrative, of a sort familiar to hagiographical students, depicting rapid conversion followed by martyrdom. It gives no scope for the humour or passion in which lies Chaucer's forte, and is unequal in merit to his later pieces. The memory of the saint is preserved by her legendary connection with music, and by the beautiful recumbent statue in her church at Rome. The legend is fully told and artistically illustrated by Mrs. Jameson in "Sacred and Legendary Art."

The fourth midday is past, and the pilgrims have reached a place called Boughton under Blee, when two men, riding so hard that their horses are bathed in foam, overtake them. One is a Chanon, a kind of monk, and with him is his Yeman or servant. The Host inquires of the Yeman as to his master's condition and character; the answer is so contemptuous and bitter that the Chanon rides away in anger, and his man proceeds with the "Chanon's Yeman's Tale." His master was an alchemist, and he describes the so-called science, Chaucer showing himself intimately acquainted with its phraseology, practice, and alleged principles, showing too that he understood it to be a pretence and a delusion. Technical as is the matter, we rejoice to get back to the lively ease which we missed in the last tale, and to the rimed couplet which marks Chaucer

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

at his best. The pretended science of alchemy, whose principal aim was the transmutation of base metals into gold, was commonly cultivated in that century, as we learn from an Act of Parliament prohibiting it in the reign of Henry IV. We know not what induced Chaucer to celebrate it here; both prologue and tale are intrusions into the original plan, and belong to the very latest period of the poet's work. His handling of it is repeated in a curious work called "Theatrum Chemicum," by Elias Ashmole, who seems to think that Chaucer was not only an adept but a believer.

There is a gap at its close, when the Host rouses up the Coke, who sits half asleep on his horse, and demands of him a tale. He refuses,

> Seyd to our host, "So God my soulë blesse,
> As ther is falle on me swich hevinesse,
> Noot I nat why, that me were lever slepe
> Than the bestë galoun wyn in Chepe."

So the Manciple takes his place with the story of PHEBUS AND THE CROWE, and how it came to pass that crows, once white, have ever since been black. The wife of Phebus is false; the white crow witnesses and betrays her treason, and the god-husband slays her; then in remorse and anger ordains that the crow and his posterity shall henceforth be black. It is recorded by many authors, notably by Ovid, from whom Chaucer probably enlarged it, and is briefly told by Gower. At its close the Host reminds them that the day draws on: it is four o'clock, and only one pilgrim remains—so ran the programme, original and

Digitized by Google

unfulfilled—whose tribute has not been paid. That is the Persone, who tells them that he cannot "geste and glose," but offers to preach a sermon. They assent, thinking it seemly "to enden in som vertuous sentence," and we are launched into the PERSONES TALE. It takes the form of an exhortation to Penitence, mapped out under divisions and subdivisions according to the fashion of the times, longer but not less dull than an ordinary sermon of to-day. Chaucer has adapted it from a French treatise by one Lorens, called "La Somme des Vices et des Vertus," dating from 1279. At its close, which we are not sorry to reach, speaking in his own person, he makes his bow; "taketh the makere of this book his leve": praying forgiveness of God for such wordly vanities, such songs and lecherous layes as have tended unto sin; while for his "Boece," "and other bokes of legendes of seintes, and omelies, and moralites, and devociouns, he gives thanks to Crist and all the Seints of hevene"; —and so, with the *Qui cum Patre*, which in its English form still ends pulpit oratory, sermon, tales, book, find their close.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV

GUIDE TO THE READING OF CHAUCER

TO readers opening Chaucer for the first time, and unacquainted with contemporary literature, certain difficulties present themselves. They are easily explained and removed; and this task I shall here endeavour briefly to perform. They are, I think, three in number: uncouth words are scattered here and there; the grammatical forms are sometimes puzzling; the metre at first sight irregular and unrhythmical. Let us take them in order.

1. The number of strange words used is not really large. By far the greater number represent altered spellings easily detected and remembered; such as *deeth* for death, *holwe* for hollow, *delices* for delights, *subgit* for subject, *noon* for none, *moot* for must, *shullen* for shall. Many more, though disused to-day, are familiar to us in Shakespeare and much later writing; such as *eek* for also, *ilke* for same, *tene* for sorrow, *pilled* for robbed, *stinte* for cease, *foison* for plenty. There remain from four hundred to five hundred words entirely obsolete. These are explained in the glossaries which accompany all the editions; to

Digitized by Google

note and alphabetize them for oneself in reading is interesting and useful practice. Take for instance the opening eighteen lines of the Prologue to the "Canterbury Tales":

Whan that Aprille with his shourës *sote*
The droghte of Marche hath perced to the rote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour,
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his swetë breeth
Inspirëd hath in every holt and heeth
The tender croppës, and the yongë sonne
Hath in the Ram his halfë cours y-ronne,
And smallë fowlës maken melodye
That slepen al the night with open *yë*,
So priketh hem Nature in hir corages,
Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimagës,
And palmers for to seken strangë strondes
To *fernë halwes, couthe* in sondry londes.
And, specially, from every shire ende
Of Engelond to Caunterbury they wende,
The holy blisful martir for to seke,
That hem hath holpen, whan that they were seke.

You will see without being told that "rote" is *root*, "swich" is *such*, "than" is *then*, "goon" is *go*, "seke" is *sick*; that "hem" and "hir" stand for *them* and *their*. There remain only the five words which I have italicised; and having learned that "sote" is another form of *sweet*, "yë" of *eyes*; that "ferne" is *distant* (far), that "halwes" are *hallowed* places or persons, and that "couthe" means *known*, as from *can* to know, the German *kennen*, still found in our word *uncouth* (literally unknown, unfamiliar), you will recognize all the words again as often as you meet them. I have taken these as the opening lines,

Digitized by Google

but I could transcribe many passages of equal length containing no one word over which any reader need hesitate.

2. The grammatical forms need attention, but nine-tenths of them will be covered by a very few rules. Of nouns the genitive mostly ends in *es*, as the Knightes Tale, the dative in *e*, as "rote," above; the plural in *es*, as "croppes," or in *en*, as modern oxen. The adjective preceded by *the*, *this*, *that* ends in *e*, "the yongë sonne." Of pronouns, *hir* stands for *her* and *their*, *hem* for *them*: of adverbs, *wher* and *ther* for *where* and *there*. The verb inflexions will usually be disclosed by the context. Thus, in the lines above, "y-ronne" is evidently a past participle, "to seken" an infinitive or gerund, "priketh" a present singular, "maken," "slepen," "longen," present plurals. The reader should keep beside him a list of the anomalous and mostly auxiliary verbs, *been*, *can*, *dar* (dare), *may*, *moot* (must), *shal*, *witen* (know), *wil*, and should note their tenses as they occur. He will also observe the contractions: *nam*, am not; *nil*, will not; *noot*, know not; *wiltow*, wilt thou; *seistow*, sayest thou. Of course the more serious student will be armed with one or more prefaces of Professor Skeat and Dr. Morris, and will let pass no grammatical form without research; but for that great majority which shall read Chaucer, as Macaulay used to read Thucydides, "with his feet on the fender and like a man of the world," for literary enjoyment that is, undistracted by attention to minute idioms and structures, I presume to think that the landmarks indicated will suffice.

Digitized by Google

There remains the most important point of all, the metrical pronunciation. Let any one, previously uninstructed, open at the "Knightes Tale," line 35, and read aloud these seven lines:

This duk, of whom I make mencioun,
Whan he was come almost unto the toun,
In all his wele [greatness] and in his moste [chiefest] pryde,
He was war [aware], as he caste his eye asyde,
Wher that ther kneled in the hye weye
A company of ladies, tweye and tweye,
Ech after other, clad in clothes blake.

Lines 2 and 6 and perhaps 4 are in the common five-accent or heroic metre; the others are in no metre at all, and run on like prose. Now read them by the marks I shall affix, remembering only that the diæresis ¨ above a syllable shows that it must be not mute but sounded, as knelëd; and that *e* in italics is to be elided or dropped. For observe—and this is the most important point of all in reading Chaucer—that in his time the final e in a word was sounded, sounded not like our e, but like the final a in Anna, elided only before a vowel, or sometimes before *h* or *th*, dropped altogether only in a few common words, such as *hadde* or *wolde*. So in line 1 "make" is pronounced *mākă*, in line 3 "moste" is *mōstă*, while in the same line the final e in "wele" is elided. Now read the lines thus:

This duk, of whom I makë mencioun,
Whan he was com*e* almost into the toun,
In all his wel*e* and in his mostë pryde,
He was war, as he cast*e* his ey*e* asyde,
Wher that ther knelëd in the hyë weye

Digitized by Google

A companye of ladies, tweye and tweye,
Ech after other, clad in clothës blake.

You will find them all fall into the heroic metre. I do not say that you will read them quite as Chaucer himself read the "Tale of Custance" before King Edward and his Court in Ford Madox Brown's famous picture, or even as Oldbuck read to Lovel in Chapter II of the "Antiquary," though I do not know what Scott meant by "giving each guttural the true Anglo-Saxon pronunciation." To "pronounce it faithfully," as Juliet says, you must study Professor Skeat's specimen on page xx of his Introduction to the "Man of Lawes Tale"; and I very much fear that when you have achieved the accuracy he imposes, you will find no one to understand a word you utter: but you may read as I have directed to your own enjoyment, and, if you read aloud, *experto crede*, to the enjoyment of others as well. I have not marked the terminations; I think you may leave them mute where ending in e.

For observe that Chaucer's ear was as fastidious as Tennysons'; he was our earliest great metrist, and his metres are so characteristic that they help us to pronounce for or against the authenticity of poems ascribed to him. Let us inquire how far he followed, how far he improved upon, the versification of his predecessors.

The cradle of English Poetry was Whitby. There, about the year 670, Cædmon paraphrased, amplified, popularized, the Bible story. For a long time after him few remains are extant; chiefly religious songs by Cynewulf and Aldhelm,

Digitized by Google

or the great battle songs of Brunanburh and Maldon. The Norman invasion checked our literature but left our speech; the Norman became an Englishman; and after a while our formal poetry recommenced with the "Brut of Layamon" about the year 1200. It flowed in two streams, historical and religious; historical, in Layamon, in "Robert of Gloucester's Chronicle," or in "Havelok the Dane"; religious, in the "Ormulum," a series of metrical homilies from the New Testament, in the "Cursor Mundi," and in Hampole's "Prick of Conscience." These poems Chaucer found widely read; in his boyhood appeared the ringing battle narratives of Laurence Minot, in his early manhood probably the "Vision of Piers the Plowman," in his later age the "Confessio Amantis" of Gower. Two metres he chiefly found in use, the four-accented rimed lines in which he wrote the "Romaunt of the Rose," and the old ballad metre of "Sir Thopas." To these he added, and introduced for the first time into our literature, the eight-line stanza of the "Monkes Tale," and the seven-line stanza of "Troilus" and the "Parlement of Foules." But his great metrical gift to our poetry was the heroic couplet, borrowed probably from the Frenchman Machault, which he used in the "Legend of Good Women" and the majority of the "Canterbury Tales."

In rime again, as in metre, he began as an experimenter and became an adept. The earlier form of English poetry was alliterative, a recurrence of similar beginnings, as rime is what Milton

Digitized by Google

superciliously calls "the jingling sound of like endings." Down to the tenth century this seems to have been the only ornament of our verse; but when we open Layamon we find alliteration with occasional rime; in Minot we have rime sprinkled with alliteration, while the "Vision of Piers Plowman" is purely alliterative. Chaucer shows us in the "Knightes Tale" (line 1747 etc.) that he could alliterate if he chose; but he disparages the device in the Prologue to the "Persones Tale"—"I can nat gestë—rum, ram, ruf—by lettre"—and he adopts rime exclusively. The skill, marvellous in a beginner, with which he overcomes its difficulties is pointed out by Professor Skeat. One poem, he says, has seventy-two lines with nine rimes, another has twenty-four lines on three rimes, another thirty-three lines on four rimes, while the Envoy to the "Clerkes Tale" shows thirty-six lines on only three rimes. And his precision in riming is not only curious; it is so unfailingly normal as to guide us in deciding on the authenticity or spuriousness of the poems attributed to him. Many of these are claimed by himself in the Man of Lawe's Prologue, line 56, etc., and in the "Legend of Good Women," line 405, etc. These then we know to be his; and by studying their grammar, scansion, and especially their rimes, we obtain criteria by which to test the poems not claimed by himself but ascribed to him by others. In grammar and scansion he adheres to the usage of the thirteenth century, and does not anticipate the usage of the fifteenth, so that where later grammatical forms are found

Digitized by Google

in a poem professing to be his the fact leads us to suspect it. But a still closer test has been found in his system of riming. The author of this invaluable discovery was the famous Cambridge bibliographer, Henry Bradshaw, to me always a dear friend and often an illuminating literary adviser. And since by some recondite law discoverers always seem to arise in pairs—witness Adams and Leverrier, Stephenson and Trevithick, Wallace and Darwin—the test was simultaneously and independently applied by Professor ten Brink on the Continent. It was observed by both, that Chaucer in his accepted poems never rimes a word ending etymologically in *y*, such as "commonly," whose termination represents the suffix *like*, with a word ending etymologically in *ye*, such as "melody(e)," whose termination represents the Italian *ia* of "melodia." So again, the ending *ight* never rimes with *yt*, as "light" with "appetyt"; nor open *o*, sounded as in *Maud*, with close *o* sounded as in *alone*, nor open *e* as in "clene," whose sound was *cleän*, with close *e* as in "grene," whose sound was *green*. And it came to be found that rimes of this and other kinds, never used by Chaucer, were habitually used in many of the poems doubtful or on other grounds discarded, the rime test absolutely supporting the testimony negative and positive of the MSS. So the consentaneous dual agreement was irresistible; it could be said with confidence that certain poems were by Chaucer; that others hitherto attributed to him were as certainly not his; and, as a consequence, the "Court of Love," the "Testament

Digitized by Google

of Love," the "Complaint of the Black Knight," "Chaucer's Dream," the "Assembly of Ladies," the "Flower and the Leaf," the "Cuckoo and the Nightingale," the "Plowman's Tale," are no longer admitted as Chaucer's, or printed among his compositions.

The first edition claiming to give a complete collection of his works, by William Thynne, 1530, was wildly miscellaneous, including many poems by other, chiefly later, authors. The edition by Stowe in 1561 merely added to Thynne's repertory fresh unauthorized pieces; while that of Speght, 1597, was copied mainly from Thynne's second issue of 1532. Urry, in 1721, brought out the "Canterbury Tales": the arbitrary innovations introduced by him into the text impaired the value of his work. Tyrwhitt, in 1775, was the first scholarly editor. He printed the "Canterbury Tales," appended valuable introduction, notes, glossary; and rejected as untenable nineteen of the poems hitherto ranked as Chaucer's. A later edition of the same was beautifully printed for Pickering in 1822; those who are so fortunate as to possess it may, like Dogberry, give God thanks. An anonymous "Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer," attributed by a misleading title-page to Tyrwhitt, was put forth in 1855, and repeated in 1868. Of more recent editions may be mentioned Singer's, Bell's, Wright's, the Aldine, and the Globe. At last, in 1894-7, appeared Professor Skeat's monumental work, extinguishing all former publications, while for those to whom its necessarily high price was

Digitized by Google

deterrent, he mercifully produced, in 1901, a small cheap edition, with a valuable Preface and Glossary. Owners of this last, with the three small Clarendon Press volumes, will have an apparatus amply sufficient for all but the most advanced Chaucerian scholarship. Their desire to know something of the predecessors, contemporaries, and immediate successors of the poet will be met by Morris and Skeat's specimens of Early English, Part II, by Skeat's small edition of "Piers the Plowman," and by Henry Morley's reprint of Gower's "Confessio Amantis" in the Carisbrooke Library. The notice of Chaucer in Green's "Short History," illustrated edition, contains portraits of the pilgrims reproduced from the Ellesmere MS. All who have access to Warton's "History of English Poetry" may read his Sections VI to XVII; much will be found in Morley's "English Writers," vol. iii; while for a brilliant aesthetic study of the author nothing can surpass the Essay in "My Study Windows" by James Russell Lowell, 1866.

I called attention in the opening chapter to Chaucer's amazing erudition. His knowledge of the Bible is shown in nearly three hundred allusions. He quotes, second hand, from Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Herodotus, Euripides, Horace, Juvenal, and from several of the Latin Fathers. He was intimate with Ovid, Virgil, Statius; acquainted with Cicero and Seneca. For knowledge of Italian he stood alone amongst Englishmen of his age; imitating Boccaccio, though he seems not to have read the "Decameron," quoting from

Digitized by Google

Dante often, from Petrarch once. French he knew familiarly from childhood, adapting or citing Trivet, de Machault, de Graunson, Deschamps, Frère Lorens, possibly Marie of France. His learning other than literary was astonishing in extent. His treatise on the Astrolabe shows his proficiency in mathematics and astronomy; he had mastered the so-called science of astrology, was conversant with the methods and the terms of alchemy; refers intelligently in the "Squyer's Tale" to the angles and reflexions of optics, while the same tale is built in great measure on his knowledge of magical arts. Nor are his illustrations drawn only from the library shelves: his verse is rich and lively with the parley of market-place and shop. In dexterous use of pithy adages, current now as then in popular talk, perhaps only two European writers have competed with him. In "Troilus," for instance, we have "nettle in dokke out," "a nine days' wonder," "sixes and sevens," "thus maketh Vertue of Necessity." In the "Monkes Tale," "therefor bihoveth him a ful long spoon that shal ete with a feend"; in the "Hous of Fame," "hit is not al gold that glaseth"; and, most interesting from Lady Macbeth's employment of it, a contemporary rendering of the old Latin "Catus edit pisces, sed non vult tingere plantas,"

> For ye be like the sweyntë [slothful] cat,
> That wolde have fish; but, wostow what?
> He woldë no-thing wete his clawes.

I have named only three or four; there are scores besides. Lord Chesterfield, who stigma-

Digitized by Google

tized all proverbs as execrably vulgar, would on this ground have disapproved of Chaucer; but he must have denounced also Lyly's "Euphues" and "Don Quixote."

It is the fate of most great writers to be undervalued by contemporaries; they await recognition in old age, or their Manes receive it in the shades. It was so with Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth; it was not so with Chaucer. At home and abroad his name was held in instant, as also in posthumous, honour. Eustache Deschamps addresses to him a passionate eulogy:

> Seneque en mœurs et Anglux en pratique,
> Tu es d'amours mondains Deux en Albie,
> Grand translateur, noble Geffrey Chaucier.

The entire poem is given by Professor Skeat. Gower compliments him through the lips of Venus; Occleve preserves his portrait, and salutes him as

> O maister dere and fader reverent,
> My maister Chaucer, flour of eloquence,
> Mirour of fructuous entendement,
> O universel fader in science.

Lydgate laments him in his "Fall of Princes"; to Gawain Douglas he is "principal Poet but [without] peer"; to King James I, "superlative as poet laureate, of morality and eloquence ornate." Spenser hails him as "well of English undefiled"; Dryden and Pope, Wordsworth, Leigh Hunt, Mrs. Browning, paraphrased his poems. Wordsworth when an undergraduate carried the "Reve's Tale" to Trumpington that

Digitized by Google

he might read it "under a levesel"; in later years set before him as models Chaucer, Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton, placing Chaucer above Burns and Crabbe as master of the natural school. Tennyson, whom we have already quoted, found in him chivalry, romance, and tragedy. We may find in him much more than this. We may learn from him to look on nature with understanding, joy, and gratitude, on humanity with hopeful optimism; may garner while we read him gentle loving thoughts and tender feelings, as we set our steps to his quick music, our hearts to his tolerant allowance and all-wide sympathy. Opening each volume in its turn we shall enter in as he feigned his own entrance through the gate in "Scipio's Dream."

Through me men goon into that blisful place
Of hertës hele and deadly woundës cure;
Through me men goon unto the welle of grace
Ther grene and lusty May shal ever endure;
This is the way to all good aventure.
Be glad, thou reder, and thy sorwe of-caste,
Al open am I; passe in, and hy the [hie thee] faste.

Digitized by Google

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ABRIDGED FROM SKEAT'S "CHAUCER CANON"

When printed

1477-1478. Canterbury Tales. Ed. 1. Caxton.
Parlement of Foules, etc. Caxton.
1479. Boethius. Caxton.
1483. Troilus. Caxton.
Canterbury Tales. Ed. 2. Caxton.
Hous of Fame. Caxton.
1493. Canterbury Tales. Ed. 3. Pynson.
1498. Canterbury Tales. Ed. 4. W. de Worde.
1499-1502. Compleynt of Mars. Julian Notary.
1517. Troilus. Ed. 2. Wynkyn de Worde.
1526. Canterbury Tales. Ed. 5. Pynson.
1522. Thynne. Works.
1542. Thynne. Works. Second issue.
1561. Stow. Works.
1598. Speght. Works.
1721. Urry. Works.
1771. Tyrwhitt. Canterbury Tales.
1822. Tyrwhitt. Ed. 2.
1845. Pickering. The Works.
1857. R. Bell. Poetical Works.
1863. R. Morris. Revised edition.

Digitized by Google

1867. Wright. The Works.
1894. Skeat. Complete Works.
1903. Globe edition. The Works.

When composed

1368. Romaunt of the Rose.
1369. Book of the Duchess.
St. Cecyle.
Monke's Tale (in part).
1372-1373. Clerke's Tale (in part).
Anelida and Arcite.
Melibœus.
Persone's Tale.
Man of Lawe's Tale.
1377-1381. Boethius.
Compleynt of Mars.
Troilus.
1382. Parlement of Foules.
1383-1384. Hous of Fame.
1385-1386. Legend of Good Women.
1386-1390. Canterbury Tales.
1391. The Astrolabe.

Digitized by Google

INDEX

A. B. C., 23.
Actium, 39.
Alceste, 38.
Alchemy, 75.
Alein Delille, 26.
Alliteration, 59, 84.
Anne of Bohemia, 37, 52.
Anelida and Arcite, 26.
Arabian Nights, 40, 44.
Artaveldt, 9.
Arviragus, 73.
Ashmole, 75.
Astrolabe, 40, 87.
Athalus, 25.
Aurelius, 73.
Austen, Jane, 54, 63.

Bailly, Harry, 47.
Becket, 45.
Bidpai, Fables, 44.
Blanche of Lancaster, 12, 25.
Boccaccio, 12, 26, 44, 49, 59, 70, 87.
Boethius, 27, etc., 77.
Book of the Duchesse, 12, 24, etc.
Boughton under Blee, 75.
Bradshaw, Henry, 47, 85.
Brigham, Nicholas, 15.
Brown, Ford Madox, 82.
Browning, Mrs., 89.
Brut of Layamon, 83, 84.
Bunyan, John, 44.
Burton, 54.

Cædmon, 82.
Calchas, 31.
Cambuscan, 73.
Cannon, 36.
Canterbury, 45, 48.
Caxton, 15, 91.
Chanon's Yeman, 47, 75.
Chaunticlere and Pertelote, 65.
Chaucer, Agnes, 10.
Chaucer, John, 10, 11.
Chaucer, Lewis, 16, 41.
Chaucer, Philippa, 13.
Chaucer, Thomas, 16.
CHAUCER, GEOFFREY. Born, 10. Page to Duchess Elizabeth, 11. Soldier in France, 11. Valet to Edward III, 12. Ambassador, 12. Promoted and rewarded, 13. Married to Philippa Roet, 13.

Digitized by Google

In favour with Richard II and his Queen, 13, 14. Knight of the Shire, 14. In adversity, 14. Restored to favour, 14. Death, 15. Tomb in Westminster Abbey, 15. Myths concerning him, 17. Periods of his Works, 19, etc. Late production of his best poems, 37. His creation of our literature, 43. His unfulfilled intentions, 44. Characteristics of his poetry, 49. Catholicity of his portraits, 53. Simplicity of his diction, 54. His vocabulary, 78. Grammar, 80. Metrical pronunciation, 81. Rimes, 83. Editions of his works, 86. Erudition, 87. Admiration of his contemporaries, 89.
Chess, 25.
Chesterfield, Lord, 88.
Child, Professor, 48.
Cicero, 26.
Clarence, Lionel, duke of, 11.
Cleopatra, 39.
Clerke's Tale, 12, 70, 84.
Coke's Tale, 60.
Coleridge, 37.
Compleynt of Mars, 24.
Compleynt unto Pite, 13, 24.
Compleynt to his Empty Purs, 15.
Croker, 72.
"Cursor Mundi," 83.
Custance, 60, 82.
Daisy, the, 38.
Dante, 9, 29, 34, 35, 40, 64, 87.
Deguilleville, G. de, 24.
Deschamps, Eustache, 19, 64, 88.
Dibdin, T. F., 20.
Doctour, 51.
Doctour's Tale, 11.
Don Quixote, 88.
Douglas, Gawain, 35, 89.
Dryden, 50, 65, 68.

Edgeworth, Miss, 65.
Edward III, King, 9, 11, 13, 82.
Eglentyne, Madame, 50.
Elizabeth, Duchess of Clarence, 11.
Elwin, W., 68.
End-links, 44, 47, 74.

FitzGerald, 37.
Fletcher, 59.
Frankeleyne, 51, 73.
Friar, 50, 69.
Froissart, 9, 12.
Fuller, 54.
Furnivall, 48, 74.

Gaunt, John of, 12.
Gay, 74.
Gervinus, 32.
Gloucester, Duke of, 14.
Gloucester, Robert of, 83.
Golden Legend, 75.
Goldsmith, 52.
Gower, 61, 68, 76, 83, 87, 89.
Grisildis, 12, 70.

Digitized by Google

Hampole, 83.
Henry IV., 15, 76.
Heptameron, 44, 74.
Homer, 34.
Hous of Fame, 17, 34, etc., 88.
Hugh of Lincoln, 62.

Itinerary of Pilgrims, 48.

James I, 20, 63, 89.
Jameson, Mrs., 75.
January and May, 72.
Johnson, Dr., 66.

Knight, the, 50.
Knightes Tale, 57, etc., 84.

Lamek, 26.
Langland, 44.
Layamon. *See* Brut.
Legend of Good Women, 14, 19, 37, etc., 45, 60, 84.
Linian, 70.
Lionel. *See* Clarence.
Loathly, Lady, 68.
Lollardism, 69.
Loller, 61.
Lollius, 34.
Lorens, 77, 88.
Lorris, Guillaume de, 17, 20.
Lowell, 87.
Lowis. *See* Chaucer, Lewis.
Lucretia, 40.
Lydgate, 35, 64, 89.
Lyly, 29, 88.

Macaulay, 29, 80.
Macbeth, Lady, 88.
Machault, G. de, 19, 63, 83, 88.
Man of Lawes Prologue, 46, 51, 84.
Man of Lawes Tale, 60.
Manciple's Tale, 76.
Marchaunt, 51.
Marchaunt's Tale, 71.
Marie of France, 88.
Melibœus, 63.
Milan, Duke of, 13.
Meun, Jean de, 19, 20.
Miller, 53.
Miller's Tale, 60.
Milton, 21, 35.
Minor Poems, 23, 24.
Minot, Laurence, 83, 84.
Mirror for Magistrates, 64.
Monk, 50.
Monk's Tale, 64, 83, 88.
Montaigne, 28.
Morley, Henry, 87.
Morris, Dr., 80, 87.

Nonnes Preestes Tale, 65.

Occleve, 16, 89.
Ormulum, 83.
Ovid, 25, 39, 76.
Oxenford Scholar, 53.

Palamon and Arcite, 57, etc.
Pardoner, 53.
Pardoner's Tale, 67.
Parlement of Foules, 26, 83.
Pecorone, 61.
Percy's Reliques, 63.
Persone, 52, 61.
Persones Tale, 77.
Petrarch, 12, 70, 87.
Phebus and the Crow, 76.

Digitized by Google

Philippa, Queen, 9.
Piers the Plowman, 83, 84.
Piers the Plowman's Crede, 49.
Pope, 35, 67, 72, 89.
Prioresse. *See* Eglentyne.
Prioresses Tale, 62.
Proverbial sayings, 88.
Prynne, Hester, 50.

Ratcliffe, Mrs., 63.
Reve, 53.
Reve's Tale, 60, 89.
Richard II, 13, 37, 38.
Roger de Coverley, 51.
Romaunt of Rose, 17, 20, etc., 45, 66, 83.

Sackville, 23.
Scogan, 24.
Scott, 33, 34, 37, 68, 73, 82.
Seynt Cecile, 74.
Shakespeare, Hamlet, 28. Lear, 34. Merchant of Venice, 72. Midsummer Night's Dream, 72. Troilus, 32.
Shipman, 51.
Shipman's Tale, 62.
Skeat, Professor, 17, 28, 41, 48, 60, 73, 80, 82, 84, 86, 87, 89.
Skelton, 23, 35.
Sompnour, 53.
Sompnour's Tale, 69.
Speght, 86.
Spenser, 27, 89.
Spurious Works, 85, 86.
Squyer, 16, 50.
Squyer's Tale, 73, 88.
Statius, 26, 34.
Swift, 69.
Swynford, Catherine, 13.

Tabard, 46, 47, 48.
Taylor, Jeremy, 29, 54.
Ten Brink, Professor, 48.
Tennyson, 37, 40, 82, 90.
Theseus, 57.
Thopas, Sir, 16, 63, 83.
Thynne, W., 86.
Troilus and Criseyde, 13, 30, etc., 83, 87.
Trivet, Nicholas, 61.
Tyrwhitt, 17, 63, 72, 86.

Ugolino, 64.
Urry, 86.

Virgil, 34, 51.
Virginia, 66.
Viri Illustres, 64.

Walton, J., 28.
Warton, T., 87.
Wordes to Adam, 24.
Wordsworth, 37, 43, 63, 89.
Wyf of Bathe, 52.
Wyf of Bathe, Prologue, 67.
Wyf of Bathes Tale, 68.

Yeman, Chanon's. *See* Chanon.
Yeman, Knightes, 50.

Zenobia, 65.

CHISWICK PRESS: PRINTED BY CHARLES WHITTINGHAM AND CO.
TOOKS COURT, CHANCERY LANE, LONDON.

Digitized by Google

The British Artists Series.

Large post 8vo, in special bindings, with 90 to 100 Illustrations, 7s. 6d. net each.

Sir Joshua Reynolds.

By LORD RONALD SUTHERLAND GOWER.

Sir Edward Burne-Jones, Bart.

By MALCOLM BELL.

Sir J. E. Millais, Bart., P.R.A.

By A. LYS BALDRY.

Frederic, Lord Leighton, P.R.A.

By ERNEST RHYS.

The English Pre-Raphaelite Painters.

Their Associates and Successors.

By PERCY BATE.

Thomas Gainsborough.

By Lord Ronald Sutherland Gower.

LONDON: GEORGE BELL & SONS.

Digitized by Google

Great Masters in Painting and Sculpture.

Edited by G. C. WILLIAMSON, Litt.D.

Post 8vo, each with 40 illustrations and photogravure frontispiece. 5s. net.

BOTTICELLI. By A. Streeter.
BRUNELLESCHI. By Leader Scott.
CORREGGIO. By Selwyn Brinton, M.A.
CARLO CRIVELLI. By G. McNeil Rushforth, M.A.
ANDREA DEL SARTO. By H. Guinness.
DELLA ROBBIA. By the Marchesa Burlamacchi.
DONATELLO. By Hope Rea.
GERARD DOU. By Dr. W. Martin.
FRANCIA. By George C. Williamson, Litt.D.
GIORGIONE. By Herbert Cook, M.A.
GIOTTO. By F. Mason Perkins.
BERNARDINO LUINI. By G. C. Williamson, Litt.D.
MANTEGNA. By Maud Cruttwell.
MEMLINC. By W. H. James Weale.
MICHAEL ANGELO. By Lord Ronald Sutherland Gower, M.A., F.S.A.
PERUGINO. By G. C. Williamson, Litt.D.
PIERO DELLA FRANCESCA. By W. G. Waters, M.A.
PINTORICCHIO By Evelyn March Phillipps.
RAPHAEL. By H. Strachey.
REMBRANDT. By Malcolm Bell.
SIGNORELLI. By Maud Cruttwell.
SODOMA. By the Contessa Lorenzo Priuli-Bon.
TINTORETTO. By J. B. Stoughton Holborn, M.A.
VELASQUEZ. By R. A. M. Stevenson.
WATTEAU. By Edgcumbe Staley, B.A.
WILKIE. By Lord Ronald Sutherland Gower, M.A., F.S.A.

In preparation:

EL GRECO. By Manuel B. Cossio, Litt.D., Ph.D.
LEONARDO DA VINCI. By Edward McCurdy, M.A.
PAOLO VERONESE. By Roger E. Fry.
GAUDENZIO FERRARI. By Ethel Halsey.

Others to follow.

Digitized by Google

Bell's Miniature Series of Painters

Pott 8vo, dainty Cloth covers, with 8 Illustrations, 1s. net each, or in limp leather, with Photogravure Frontispiece, 2s. net.

Now Ready.

ALMA TADEMA.	MICHELANGELO.
BURNE-JONES.	MILLET.
CONSTABLE.	MILLAIS.
CORREGGIO.	MURILLO.
FRA ANGELICO.	RAPHAEL.
GAINSBOROUGH.	REMBRANDT.
GREUZE.	REYNOLDS.
HOGARTH.	ROMNEY.
HOLBEIN.	TURNER.
HOLMAN HUNT.	VELAZQUEZ.
LORD LEIGHTON.	WATTS.
LANDSEER.	WATTEAU.

Others to follow.

Opinions of the Press.

"Highly satisfactory from every point of view."—*Westminster Budget.*

"The illustrations are uniformly excellent. If art is to be made popular, this assuredly is the way to do it."—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

"They are clearly and intelligibly written and are just the thing for the amateur art student."—*Literature.*

"Exquisite little volumes."—*Black and White.*

"Eminently tasteful."—*Globe.*

"A delightful little edition."—*Western Morning News.*

"Exceedingly handy and pretty."—*Outlook.*

Digitized by Google

The Endymion Series.

Poems by Percy Bysshe Shelley.

ILLUSTRATED AND DECORATED BY R. ANNING BELL.
With Introduction by PROFESSOR WALTER RALEIGH.
Post 8vo, 7s. 6d.

Poems by John Keats.

ILLUSTRATED AND DECORATED BY R. ANNING BELL.
With Introduction by PROFESSOR WALTER RALEIGH.
Third Edition, post 8vo, 7s. 6d.

Poems by Robert Browning.

ILLUSTRATED AND DECORATED BY BYAM SHAW.
With Introduction by DR. R. GARNETT.
Second Edition, revised, post 8vo, 7s. 6d.

English Lyrics from Spenser to Milton.

ILLUSTRATED AND DECORATED BY R. ANNING BELL.
Selected with Introduction by JOHN DENNIS.
Post 8vo, 6s.

Milton's Minor Poems,
Including Comus and Samson Agonistes.

ILLUSTRATED AND DECORATED BY A. GARTH JONES.
Post 8vo, 6s.

The Poems of Edgar Allan Poe.

ILLUSTRATED AND DECORATED BY
W. HEATH ROBINSON.
With an Introduction by H. NOEL WILLIAMS.
Second Edition, post 8vo, 6s.

Digitized by Google

Bell's Cathedral Series.

Profusely Illustrated. Crown 8vo, cloth, 1s. 6d. net each.

Now Ready.

Bristol.—Canterbury.—Carlisle.—Chester.—Chichester.—Durham.—Ely.—Exeter.—Gloucester.—Hereford.—Lichfield.—Lincoln.—Manchester.—Norwich.—Oxford.—Peterborough.—Ripon.—Rochester.—St. Albans.—St. David's.—St. Paul's.—Salisbury.—Southwell.—Wells.—Winchester.—Worcester.—York.

The following uniform Volumes are also published, 1s. 6d. net each.

English Cathedrals. An Itinerary and Description.—Westminster Abbey.—St. Martin's Church, Canterbury.—Beverley Minster.—Tewkesbury Abbey and Deerhurst Priory.—Christchurch Priory and Wimborne Abbey.—Bath Abbey, Malmesbury Abbey, and Bradford-on-Avon Church.—Stratford-on-Avon Church.

Bell's Handbooks to Continental Churches.

Profusely Illustrated. Crown 8vo, 2s. 6d. net each.

Chartres.—Rouen.—Amiens.—Paris (Notre Dame).—Mont St. Michel.

Digitized by Google

Life and Light Books.

Prettily Bound, 1s. net each Volume.

THE GREATEST THING EVER KNOWN. By RALPH WALDO TRINE. *16th Thousand.*

EVERY LIVING CREATURE. By RALPH WALDO TRINE.

CHARACTER-BUILDING: Thought Power. By RALPH WALDO TRINE.

LEGENDS AND LYRICS. By ADELAIDE A. PROCTER. *130th Thousand.* First Series.

LEGENDS AND LYRICS. By ADELAIDE A. PROCTER. *99th Thousand.* Second Series.

PARABLES FROM NATURE. A Selection. By MRS. M. GATTY.

MARCUS AURELIUS ANTONINUS. George Long's Translation.

THE DISCOURSES OF EPICTETUS. George Long's Translation. 2 vols.

AURORA LEIGH. By MRS. BROWNING.

TENNYSON'S IN MEMORIAM.

EMERSON'S CONDUCT OF LIFE.

FATE MASTERED—DESTINY FULFILLED. By W. J. COLVILLE.

LIGHT FROM THE EAST. Selections from the Teaching of the Buddha. By EDITH WARD.

BILLY AND HANS: My Squirrel Friends. A True History. By W. J. STILLMAN.

KITH AND KIN: Poems of Animal Life selected by HENRY S. SALT.

FRIENDS OF MINE. By MRS. CORBET SEYMOUR.

BETTER FOOD FOR BOYS. By EUSTACE H. MILES.

MATHEMATICAL LAW IN THE SPIRITUAL WORLD. By EUSTACE H. MILES.

Digitized by Google

The Carillon Series.

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT ANNING BELL.

Printed in red and black at the Chiswick Press. In decorated paper boards, 1s. 6d. net each; or in limp leather, 2s. 6d. net.

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám.

RENDERED INTO ENGLISH VERSE BY EDWARD FITZGERALD.

The Odes of Keats.

Keats' Isabella and the Eve of St. Agnes.

Milton's Lycidas, L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, and Ode on the Nativity.

Bell's Sonnets Series.

Printed at the Chiswick Press, with borders and initials by CHRISTOPHER DEAN. *Royal 16mo, 2s. 6d. net each.*

THE SONNETS OF JOHN KEATS.
THE SONNETS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.
SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE. BY MRS. BROWNING.
BROWNING'S RABBI BEN EZRA.
DANTE'S VITA NUOVA, OR NEW LIFE.
Newly translated by FRANCES DE MEY.
SONNETS BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

Digitized by Google